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## First language use by adequate formal schooling adult English language learners in a university English language institute

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The Dissertation Committee for The University of Texas at Brownsville Certifies that this is the  
Approved Version of the Following Dissertation:

First Language Use by Adequate Formal Schooling Adult English Language Learners in a  
University English Language Institute

By


Joel S. Garza

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

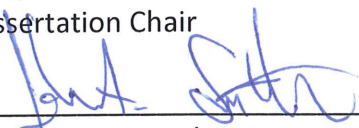
Doctor of Education

In the Field of Curriculum and Instruction

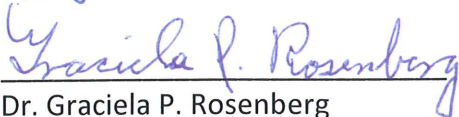
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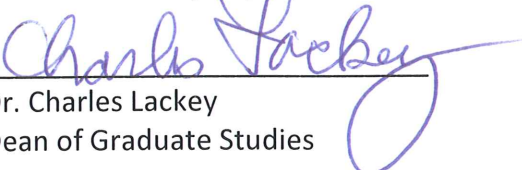
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March 2012

First Language Use by Adequate Formal Schooling Adult English Language Learners in a  
University English Language Institute

Dissertation

Submitted In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctorate in Education Degree in  
Curriculum and Instruction with Specialization in Bilingual Studies

Joel S. Garza

Spring 2012

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my three loving daughters and my beloved wife. Without their understanding, support, and sacrifice I would not have been able to accomplish this professional goal. I also dedicate this work in memory of my parents whose continuous blessings inspired me to pursue this dream. I will be eternally grateful to them for their tireless efforts in giving me an education.

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## Abstract

In their pursuit of a better way of life, immigrants who arrive in this country are faced with many challenges. One important challenge is their need to adapt to a new society that requires them to learn English as a second language (ESL). As adult learners enter ESL programs, they are confronted with a *common sense* belief that the exclusion of their native language (L1) and the exclusive use of the target language (TL) in their instruction is the best approach to learn English. Whether immigrant students are educated or not in their home countries, they face the double task of learning to speak and understand a new language, while also learning how to read and write in that same language. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to discover *if* and *how* a group of L1 educated adult learners used their first language as they learned and developed academic English in a university English language institute. An additional objective of the study was to examine the perceptions this sample group of adult students had towards their L1 as a learning and linguistic resource. Seven Spanish-speaking participants with a high school and/or college level L1 education were selected to take part in this qualitative study. Findings indicated that, in spite of some negative opinions expressed towards their L1, this group of L1 educated students used and relied on their L1 to develop academic English.

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

**Background**

The United States has historically been an important destination for immigrants from around the world. Given its democratic values and the vast opportunities for professional, academic, and personal growth, people from around the world seek a better future when they immigrate to this country. It is estimated that between 2000 and 2007, the immigrant population grew from 30 million to 37.3 million (Camarota, 2007). According to immigration statistics of the Department of Homeland Security, an estimated 10 million people became legal permanent residents in the last decade.

A significant challenge that many immigrants face, however, is the ability to adapt to a new society that requires them to learn English as a second language (ESL). Terrazas and Batalova (2009) report that “in 2008, 52.1 percent of the 37.7 million foreign born age 5 and older were Limited English Proficient (LEP), compared with 51.0 percent of the 30.7 million foreign born age 5 and older in 2000.” Immigrant adults are required to learn the English language for numerous reasons, primarily for communicative competence (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985; Judd, 2000; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Zhonggang Gao 2001). In their pursuit of a better life, education and language learning have become significant factors for incoming children and adults.

Some of the challenges that immigrant adults face when making a decision to learn English are lack of money, lack of time, lack of childcare, and awareness of ESL programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Despite their many challenges, adult learners

continue to enroll in ESL classes at the national level. Adults enrolled in federally funded, state administered adult ESL programs accounted for over 1 million or 42% in 2001 (Burt & Peyton, 2003). According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA), 1.2 million adults were enrolled in ESL or English literacy programs in 2003-2004. The NCELA also reports that participation has been higher in states such as Arizona, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, and the state of Washington and that classes in ESL accounted for more than 50% of the overall adult education enrollment in 2003-2004.

While enrollment in adult ESL programs continues to increase at a national level, participation at state levels fluctuates. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005), participation in adult ESL programs in the state of Texas, for example, increased between 1999 and 2001 from 53,680 to 55,813. However, from 2003 to 2004, participation decreased from 69,490 to 66,667, as well as from 2006 to 2007 where participation decreased from 59,174 to 52,576. Although adult learners continue to enroll at the national and state levels, debates about how to best educate these students remain.

The growing debate of the right approach to teaching adult English language learners (ELLs) has triggered the interest of researchers to study the use of L1 in the ESL classroom. It is important to review how ESL and bilingual programs function and what their overall objectives are so that conclusions of whether to use the target language exclusively or to allow the use of students L1 can be drawn.

### **Conceptual Framework**

ESL and bilingual education programs share the purpose of teaching English. However, there is often confusion regarding the true objectives of bilingual programs, what bilingual and ESL programs entail, and who should be served (Freeman cited in Garcia & Baker, 2007). Some bilingual programs focus on students' acquisition of the target language by using students' L1 as they learn the content areas. However, whether the learner's first language is considered a linguistic barrier or support is based on the perception of what García (2010) calls *linear bilingualism*. This notion suggests that bilingualism can be subtractive or additive.

### **Subtractive and Additive Views**

A subtractive view of bilingual education requires relinquishing the mother tongue of minority language children and immersing them into the target language as a medium of instruction in order to assimilate to the host country's culture. With the idea of a single language and culture, students who are placed in transitional bilingual education programs fulfill this requirement, although many of them are not academically and—in some cases—linguistically successful. The additive view, on the other hand, perceives language as a resource and as an important tool for education and society. Under this view, minority languages are enriched and maintained for their uniqueness and linguistic support. Majority language speakers also perceive the additive view as an advantage. The social elite are advocates of the additive view because adding a new language to already prestigious languages (e.g. English or French) adds more power in society. Aside from academic benefits, an important reason for using students' L1 under additive bilingual programs is the ability to maintain communication with parents and grandparents (Cummins, cited in García & Baker, 2007a).

In spite of the differences between the subtractive and additive models, García (2010) argues that students' bilingualism should not be viewed as the ability to use two separate languages, but as a much more interrelated process. Bilingualism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a dynamic and complex process that can be perceived as a vehicle capable of adapting to all roads of communication (García & Kleifgen, 2010). This notion of dynamic bilingualism calls for the inclusion of students' L1. This approach is normally discussed in the K-12 context, but the ideas apply to adult ESL as well. Under this notion, the use of students' L1 serves as a supporting platform that can be used during the acquisition of the target language. In an environment where the focus is learning English, students' L1 becomes part of a dynamic process for language learning and use.

### **English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs**

ESL programs are implemented to serve both children and adults. For children and adolescents, ESL programs are available in some schools at the elementary, secondary, and high school levels (Freeman cited in Baker, 2007). One such program is known as ESL pull-out where students are removed from the mainstream classroom to spend time learning the English language. Another type of program is the ESL push-in where an ESL teacher goes into the mainstream classroom to scaffold instruction for English language learners. Yet another program is the sheltered ESL program where students are segregated for special instruction in the content area. For adults, ESL programs may be in the form of "adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE) classes, private language schools, and in programs sponsored by community-based organization and volunteer literacy organizations such as ProLiteracy"

(Burt & Peyton, 2003, p. 3). Many ESL programs target English language skills through grammar, vocabulary, and oral skills for curriculum purposes (Baker, 2007).

### **English Only**

As Judd (2000) points out, the misconception that this country's heritage is threatened by the use immigrants' first languages drives the ideology of English-only practices in adult ESL classrooms. Auerbach (1993) claims that an English-Only philosophy is driven more from the notion that speaking good English is being a good American. While English-only advocates continue to argue in favor of assimilation and ignoring first language development in children and adults, ELL's continue to struggle in their efforts to learn English for academic purposes.

For adult ELL's, the difficulty to learn English as a second language is largely due to their inability to comprehend class material when English-only policies are in place. According to Freeman and Freeman (2009), many educators, administrators, parents, and the general public believe that teaching English in English will result in more English attainment. Judd (2000) contends that expecting adults to acquire and learn a second language, advance socially and economically, and adjust to the American society immediately upon their arrival to this country is nonsense.

The belief that more exposure to English will result in more English is based on ideological assumptions rather than on pedagogical grounds (Auerbach, 1993). Advocates of an all-English instruction approach for adult ESL learners draw their conclusion from the idea that a communicative approach solely in the target language is in the students' best interest and maximizes learner's use of the target language (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003).

### **Native Language (L1) Use**

Drawing on Cummins' (1980 & 1981a) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model, it is logical to assume that adult learners are capable of reaching their full potential in second language acquisition and academic performance, provided their first language has reached a high level of academic development and it is acknowledged and considered a resource. Baker (2007) discusses academic development using the Threshold Theory. He defines the Threshold Theory as a house with three floors. The first floor represents the level of students whose competence in the first or second language is not adequately developed. Students in this category are academically challenged and do not perform well in school. In the second floor, students possess competency in only one language. Partially bilingual students may function in the classroom using their more developed language, but they are unlikely to have major cognitive differences than monolingual students. The third floor identifies a category of students who have age-appropriate competency in two or more languages. This category reflects more of a balanced bilingual student—a student who has equal fluency in two languages—who can easily demonstrate more cognitive advantages over monolingual students. The underlying concept is that the more competency and development in two languages the better the academic performance.

Auerbach (2000) claims that adult ESL classes with native language instruction not only enhance retention and progress, but also facilitate communicative, learner-centered instruction. Native language support within the process of acquiring a second language allows adult ESL students to feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts and doubts. Auerbach (1993) further contends that the benefits of using students' L1 include attracting previously underserved adult



students, reducing the affective barriers, developing the habit of thinking in English, and increasing the use of English.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As adult learners go into the ESL classroom, they are soon confronted with a prevalent belief that the exclusion of their native language (L1) and the exclusive use of the target language (TL) in their instruction is the best approach to learn English (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Cummins, 2007; Edstrom, 2006; García, 2010; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Wigglesworth, 2005). Both children and adult learners in ESL classes have been challenged by the enforcement of laws dictating the use of English Only in the classrooms. In California, for example, one such policy, Proposition 227, limited bilingual education and required students to be mainstreamed into all-English classrooms as quickly as possible (Baker, 2007; Judd, 2000; Lukes, 2009). Similar measures followed in Arizona and Massachusetts. Freeman (cited in García & Baker, 2007) claims that a reason why these policies were passed was that people did not know that the ultimate goal of bilingual education is to develop the English language. Auerbach (2000) asserts that, while learning English, adequate exposure of adult ELLs' first language in ESL classes can foster confidence and self-esteem. However, not all ESL educators believe that it is in the best interest of this country to allow adult ELL's to use their native language (Judd, 2000).

Adult ESL learners have generally been faced with the challenge of learning English in classes that impose English-only policies (Lukes, 2009). This all-English practice has created many difficulties in second language acquisition for adult ESL learners, especially for those with very low levels of literacy in their first language (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004). Limited or no

proficiency in adult learners' first language results in their facing the double task of learning to speak and understand a new language, while also learning how to read and write in that same language (Gunn, 1994).

Some adult ELLs come to adult ESL classes with a high level of literacy in their L1, while others may not have had an opportunity to go to school in their country of origin. Students with limited or no literacy in their L1 have more difficulty in learning a second language than students who are literate in their first language (Auerbach, 2000; Bialystok, 2002; Bigelow & Tarone, 2004; Jiang & Kuehn, 2001; Sinclair, 1995). Earl (cited in Auerbach, 2000) claims that, "there is a definite link between native language literacy, in this case Spanish, and the subsequent acquisition of oral English proficiency. The fact is that students with limited schooling simply have a much harder time learning English whether in or out of class" (p. 19). This claim is supported by Cummins' theory of Common Underlying Proficiency (1980 & 1981a). According to this theory, human beings possess a central processing system that enables them to draw on acquired knowledge of literacy when learning a second language. Based on this assumption, the higher the level of literacy skills in the native language, the easier it is to transfer the same skills to the second language or the more skills there are to transfer.

High or low L1 literacy proficiency can be linked to educational levels. Adult ESL learners' level of education and proficiency in their L1 can be an important indicator of how differently ELLs acquire a second language. Olsen & Jaramillo (1999) describe three types of learners: adequate formal learners, limited formal learners, and long-term English learners. First, adequate formal learners are those students who have had adequate education in their native language and arrive with grade level first language literacy. Although at first they may not perform well academically and may not possess conversational fluency in English, they are

capable of catching up to their native English speaking peers. Second, limited formal learners are those who have experienced interruptions in their education because of war, poverty, or lack of school facilities. This category of learners is what Huntley (1992) describes as semi-literate ELLs. These learners arrive with limited or no literacy in their first language. Third, long-term English learners have been in the U.S. for seven years or more. Although they possess conversational fluency in English, they have not developed sufficient literacy in their L1 or L2 to do well academically and their standardized tests scores are generally low (Freeman & Freeman, 2002).

### **Context**

This research study is conducted in a university English language institute located along the Texas-Mexico border. This language institute is a component of the continuing education division of a state university. The mission of this program is two-fold. First, it serves continuing education students—international and/or U.S. citizens or legal residents—seeking language training for professional, academic, or personal reasons. Second, it serves local, academically-challenged English language learners who are either high school graduates seeking college admission, or drop-out students who have obtained a GED and are also seeking college admission.

The enrollment of this program generally consists of Mexican citizens of whom 50% are border commuter students. Mexican citizens from non-border Mexican states make up 5% of the program's enrollment. Other international students make up 5% of the program's enrollment. U.S. citizens or legal residents make up approximately 40% of the program's enrollment.

### **Purpose of the Study**

While the reasons for learning English as a second language may be similar for most adult learners, the academic background in their L1 may not always be the same. In an adult ESL setting, adequate formal learners, limited formal learners, and long-term English learners (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999) may display different ways of learning a language. This dissertation, however, will focus on adequate formal learners. The purpose of this study is to discover *if* and *how* adult adequate formal learners use their first language as they learn and develop academic English. An additional objective is to examine participant perceptions of L1 use as a learning and linguistic resource. This research will be guided by the following questions:

- 1) How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?
- 2) What are the different learning practices (e.g., asking questions, drawing on cognates, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners used during their L1 educational experience?
- 3) How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?

Many studies have been undertaken on the use of students' L1 use (e.g., August, 2006; Edstrom, 2006; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Jiang & Kuehn, 2001; Pappamihel, Nishimata, & Mihai, 2008; Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney, 2008; Schweers, 1999), however, hardly any has focused on adult learners' specific educational levels and how they draw on their L1 knowledge and skills to help them develop academic proficiency in English. Aside from learning how adult

ELLs use their L1 to acquire academic proficiency in a second language, this dissertation will provide an understanding of how adequate formal learners perceive an English-only approach and whether they favor it or reject it. Understanding learning practices of students in this category can shed light on how curricula can be developed or modified to meet the specific needs of these students.

### **Limitations**

While the effectiveness of this study will depend on the information derived from participant input and feedback, adult students' interest, desire, and commitment to participate will be key in the success of this study. Since this study will target participants from the adequate formal learner category exclusively, a significant limitation may be the availability of these students during the same period of the study. Although the enrollment at the university language institute program where the research will be undertaken varies each semester, sufficient participants from the adequate formal learner category must be present during the research study period in order to obtain the necessary data for analysis. Furthermore, if only a limited number of participants from the mentioned category is found in the intended semester, their unwillingness to participate will also pose a major risk.

Another limitation is the participants' commitment to remain throughout the study. Although participants' right to withdraw from the study at any given time will be honored and respected, emergencies that may arise during the study may jeopardize participation and study results. This possibility, however, will be anticipated and measures such as having alternate participants will be contemplated.

Finally, this study will encompass only a small sample size. For that reason, any conclusions that are reached can only be tentative, particularly since the period of observation is relatively short. Although this study will yield valuable information, more extensive research studies will need to be conducted to better understand learning practices among adult ELL's with different educational levels in their L1 and to confirm or disconfirm the findings of this study.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Throughout this dissertation, the following key terms will be used:

*Adults:* In this study this term refers to anyone beyond the high school level.

*Bilingual Education:* Education that incorporates two languages.

*English-Only:* This term makes reference to the advocacy of English as the official language of instruction in the U.S. (Baker, 2007).

*ESL:* English as a Second Language.

*ELL:* English language learners, whether children or adults.

*Immigrants:* Illegal and/or lawfully permanent residents (U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/immigration.html>, n.d.)

*L1:* The native language of English language learners.

*L2:* Refers to the target language, may also be referred to as TL.

*SLA:* Second Language Acquisition

### **Summary**

Statistics indicate that immigration is a significant cause of overall population growth. The number of adult English language learners—both immigrants and U.S. citizens and legal

residents—has similarly increased in the last 30 years. According to the 1990 Census, there were approximately 25.5 million adults (age 18 and older) in the U.S. who reported speaking a language other than English at home; these people are considered to be language-minority adults (NCES, 1998). Nonetheless, enrollment in ESL classes—or other adult education programs—is on the rise.

Coupled with the need to adjust to a new society and a new language, adult learners face the challenge of learning English in classrooms that enforce English Only policies (Auerbach, 1993& 2000; Judd, 2000). Despite advocacy for English Only educational practices in adult ESL classrooms, extensive research indicates that bilingualism in the classroom enhances cognitive levels and English language attainment (Baker, 2007). For this reason, researchers such as Bigelow & Tarone (2004) believe that it is important to account for L1 literacy levels of adult learners in order to gain a broader understanding of adult ESL learning practices.

Bilingual and ESL programs for children and adults have an ultimate goal of increasing the level of English proficiency. Bilingual programs concentrate on content area instruction to achieve this objective. Transitional bilingual programs focus on a subtractive view that attempts to immerse and assimilate students to the host country as quickly as possible with minimal use of students' L1. Dual language bilingual programs, on the other hand, regard students' L1 as an important resource and support its use throughout the students' education. ESL programs are available for children and adults. Children may be pulled-out of classrooms during the day for ESL instruction or they may be given ESL instruction inside the same classroom by a certified ESL teacher. Adults generally attend ESL programs that target communicative competence. These programs are usually in the form of adult basic education through community colleges or private language schools.

This chapter presented immigration statistics that reflect significant growth in the number of adults who need to learn English as a second language in the United States. It also presented a brief description of how bilingual education and ESL programs function and how programs can target English language learning through students' use of L1. Chapter 2 will follow with a review of literature that provides research and findings relating to second language acquisition and adult ESL learners. Chapter 2 provides a broader perspective of how L1 use in the adult ESL classroom has been previously studied and how researchers have interpreted and discussed the use of L1 instruction in adult ESL classes. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology to be used in this dissertation study. In this chapter the research questions will be defined and addressed and a description of how the data will be collected and analyzed will be presented.



## CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Introduction**

One of the leading causes of great concern for American educators is the increasing number of English language learners (ELLs) in public schools. Between 1979 and 2008 the number of students who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 to 10.9 million (NCES, 2010). ELLs can be recent immigrant students or students who have lived in the U.S. for generations (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Just like ELL children in public schools, the number of adult ELLs has increased and these adult students are entering ESL programs at a high rate (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008) making ESL the fastest growing area of adult education (Tucker, 2007). According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (2005), of all the adults who attended adult education classes throughout the nation, 43.8% attended ESL or English literacy programs in 2003-2004, while only 39.7% enrolled in Adult Basic Education (ABE), and 16.5% enrolled in Adult Secondary Education (ASE). In comparison to previous years, ESL attendance percentages also ranked higher in 2001 and 1999 respectively. In 2001 ESL indicated 42% enrollment, while ABE reflected 37%, and ASE only 20%. In 1999 the ESL enrollment was 39%, while ABE reflected 37%, and ASE was only 24%. In the state of Texas alone it was reported that 54% attended ESL classes, 40% attended ABE, and only 6% attended ASE in 2003-2004.

A major challenge, however, for adult ELLs in ESL programs is the English-only policies implemented in many adult ESL classrooms (Auerbach, 2000; García, 2010; Judd, 2000; Lukes, 2009; Wigglesworth, 2005). With the exclusion of students' use of their L1 in the ESL

classrooms, English-Only policies target a quick immersion in English (Auerbach, 2000; Cummins, 2007). In contrast to English-Only instructional policies in the adult ESL classrooms, however, a significant body of research suggests that the use of students' L1 renders more benefits for adult students learning English (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Lukes, 2009; Murray, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003;).

Whether adult ELLs may perceive an English-Only approach more effective or whether they prefer the use of their L1 when learning English, an important factor to be considered is their L1 educational level. This dissertation study will focus on students with a high school or college education in their L1—adequate formal learners (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999)—and how they draw on their native language as they learn academic English. The study will further explore what the students' attitude is toward the use of L1.

This chapter is divided in the following areas: (1) Second Language Teaching Methods, (2) Theories of Second Language Acquisition, (3) English Language Learners, (4) The Political and Social Context, (5) Adult English Language Programs, and (6) Literature on L1 Use in the Adult Classroom.

### **Second Language Teaching Methods**

In this section I present literature relevant to second language teaching methodology and second language acquisition derived from experts in the field of education, psychology, and linguistics. The literature presents a wide array of views drawn from schools of thought that eventually led to different forms of teaching languages. Learning ideologies such as the behaviorists, the cognitivists, and the constructivists, for example, played a significant role in shaping learning and teaching styles in the field of adult ESL. I'm presenting this part of the

literature on teaching methods because I'm examining the use of adult ESL students' L1 in second language teaching.

This section is divided into five categories: (1) contexts and orientations, (2) theories of learning, (3) competence and performance, (4) English-Only policies, and (5) native language L1 use in adult ESL. The contexts and orientations sub-section describes educators' experiences and views towards language teaching along with differences in the educational setting. Under the theories of learning sub-section I discuss how linguists and psychologists perceived language learning to be most effective. In the competence and performance sub-section I discuss how some scholars interpret the ability people have to use language under various situations. Under the English-Only policies sub-section I discuss the rationale for this view of teaching language. Finally and in contrast to the English-Only policies, I conclude with literature that discusses the use of native language use in the adult ESL setting.

### **Contexts and Orientations**

There are many debates about the field of second language acquisition (Badea, 2009). Topics that have been controversial include native language use (Auerbach, 1993; Baker, 2007; Cummins, 2007; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Jiang & Kuehn, 2001; Judd, 2000; Murray, 2005; Wigglesworth, 2005), students' literacy levels, (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004), and language teaching approaches (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Theories of learning and teaching practices differ in many aspects. Freeman and Freeman (1998), for example, describe two fundamental aspects of language teaching: *context & orientations*.

*Contexts* refer to the different working environments and the different student groups. In their description of contexts, Freeman and Freeman make reference to the differences in

language teaching settings, such as K-12 multilingual, K-12 bilingual, college-age students, and adult learners. A context can be determined by variables such as 1) language and 2) the age and goals of students. First, the English language can be taught in an English speaking country where the instruction is referred to as English as a second language because it is constantly being used. Wigglesworth (2005) explains that “in ESL contexts, the learner’s first language will often be limited to that of a social role, and its use in other contexts may interfere with communication, or be inappropriate” (p. 3). Teaching English in a non-English speaking country, on the other hand, is considered English as a foreign language.

Second, the age and goals of ESL students can also define a context. Adult learners and college-age students have communication and/or academic objectives respectively. Adult learners’ needs range from basic survival English language skills to courses preparing them for higher education, whereas college-age students focus on more advanced English language learning to get them ready for regular college work (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). While adult learners may have no formal schooling in their native language, college-age students generally have at least a high-school education. In contrast to adult ESL students, children in public schools generally require and receive English for communication and school subjects (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).

The second aspect of teaching is *orientation*. Freeman and Freeman describe orientation as the teacher’s perception of how to teach based on his/her “language learning experiences, the teacher’s formal coursework, or past experiences” (p. 5). Many of these perceptions drive the way teachers feel about the best way to educate language students. In fact, during the early part of the twentieth century there have been different perceptions of how language should be taught. Richards & Rodgers (2001) discuss this concept as follows:

Language teaching in the twentieth century was characterized by frequent change and innovation and by the development of sometimes competing language teaching ideologies.....Changes in language teaching methods throughout history have reflected recognition of changes in the kind of proficiency learners need, such as a move toward oral proficiency rather than reading comprehension as the goal of language study; they have also reflected changes in theories of the nature of language and of language learning (p. 1 & 3).

In their discussion of teaching orientations, Freeman and Freeman (1998) talk about the following orientations: *the grammar-based orientation, the communicative-based orientation, the empiricist orientation, the rationalist orientation, and the socio-psycholinguistic orientation.*

**Grammar-based orientation.** In the *grammar-based orientation*, studying a second or foreign language requires students to learn the grammar of such language along with its vocabulary. The objective of this orientation is not to communicate, but to learn how to translate the target language to the native language and vice versa. For this reason, the native language is the medium of instruction (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Freeman & Freeman, 1998). Perhaps the most widely known example of this orientation is the grammar-translation method. Griffiths & Parr (2001) state that “the major focus of this method tended to be on reading and writing, with relatively little attention paid to speaking and listening” (p. 247). Although this method was once widely accepted, it has come to be rejected because “it does

virtually nothing to enhance a student's communicative ability in the language" (Brown, 2007, p. 16).

**Communicative-based orientation.** Contrary to the grammar-based orientation, the *communicative-based orientation* emphasizes direct interaction with native speakers of the target language. Lessons, activities, and student-teacher interaction inside the classroom is entirely in the target language for students to learn how to use the language to communicate. The Direct Method was one of the approaches developed under the notion of communicative language learning which demanded complete exclusion of the native language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Although it gained great popularity, it was also criticized because its strict emphasis on the target language created frustration in teachers and students. Richards and Rodgers explain it as follows:

Critics pointed out that strict adherence to Direct Method principles was often counterproductive, since teachers were required to go to great lengths to avoid using the native language, when sometimes a simple, brief explanation in the student's native language would have been a more efficient route to comprehension (p. 13).

Richards and Rodgers make reference to a Harvard psychologist who claimed that teachers using the Direct Method went as far as performing "verbal gymnastics" in order to convey meaning where a simple translation would have been more productive. The Direct

Method declined in Europe and the United States by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century (Brown, 2007).

**Empiricist orientation.** Another orientation discussed by Freeman and Freeman is the *empiricist orientation*. While the grammar-translation method concentrated on written language and the direct method focused on both written and oral language production, methods under the empiricist orientation targeted oral language production as a priority. One of the methods under this orientation was the audiolingual method, which came about as a result of the U.S. involvement in World War II. The empiricist orientation was based on behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics (Brown, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Under this orientation, learning a second language required constant drilling and memorization because language was regarded as a set of habits. Stimuli and behavior response became the foundation of this approach drawn from a behaviorist learning theory (see behaviorist learning theory below). Other methods under the empiricist orientation are *notional-functional approach* and *suggestopedia* (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).

**Rationalist orientation.** In contrast to the behaviorist approach of learning through external stimulus on the learner, which concentrated on repetitive drills under the empiricist orientation, the *rationalist orientation* called for a more natural language learning process. This orientation draws on the “innateness” of human beings and their capability to produce language automatically (see cognitive learning theory below). According to Brown (2007), both generative linguists and cognitive psychologists concentrated on deeper structures of human behavior (e.g., logic, reason, inference, etc.) through a *rational* approach. He argued that

“instead of focusing rather mechanistically on stimulus-response connections, cognitivists tried to discover psychological principles of organization and functioning” (p. 11). Chomsky (1959), a proponent of this ideology, refuted the belief of observable stimuli and responses to language learning and argued in favor of what he called *transformational-generative grammar* (TGG) (Freeman & Freeman, 1998). Chomsky’s concept of TGG emphasized the notion of deeper structures rather than the surface structure of language. Unlike the behaviorist concept of external analysis, Chomsky argued that language learning stemmed from the inner human mechanism and this, in turn, shaped the surface structures. The outward expression of language, or *language performance*, became an important concept to study and define (further explained under competence and performance below). The methods that align with the rationalist orientation are the *silent way*, *community language learning*, *total physical response*, *natural approach*, and *CALLA* (Freeman & Freeman, 1998).

**Socio-psycholinguistic orientation.** The last orientation described by Freeman and Freeman is the *socio-psycholinguistic orientation*. This orientation is drawn from the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Rosenblatt under the constructivist school of thought (see constructivist learning theory below). Piaget’s theory states that learning is dependent upon a learner’s development. Cavicchi, Chiu, and McDonnell, (2009) explain that “development depends crucially on our capacity to make multiple possibilities available for consideration at the same time. It is not a step-by-step procedure of going from one prediction defined in isolation to another” (p. 197). Under this theory, limiting our thoughts also limits our possibilities for further discovery. According to Piaget, human beings change their way of thinking when new



knowledge is received, since this allows for construction of new structures of thought (Cavicchi et. al, 2009; Freeman & Freeman, 1998).

While Piaget argued that people go through a series of development stages during their learning process, Vygotsky leaned towards the effects that others played on the learner (Brown, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 1998). According to Vygotsky, learning takes place when a student constructs meaning and acquires knowledge strictly through social interaction. He developed his theory of zone of proximal development (ZPD) which defines the existing abilities or tasks that students are capable of doing and the ones students have the potential of doing with sufficient stimulus (Arroio, 2010; Freeman & Freeman, 1998). Although Vygotsky and Piaget are both constructivists, their perceptions of cognitive development differ. Piaget argues that a person's cognitive development is an individual process that may be biologically influenced and/or affected by learning experiences (Freeman & Freeman, 1998). Vygotsky, on the other hand, contends that "social interaction was foundational in cognitive development and rejected the notion of predetermined stages" (Brown, 2007, p. 14).

As another constructivist under the *socio-psycholinguistic orientation*, Rosenblatt talks about the construction of meaning through reading. According to Rosenblatt, meaning construction takes place when a transaction occurs between the reader and the text (Freeman & Freeman, 1998). Based on this assumption, the meaning of any text may be interpreted differently by different readers. Furthermore, prior knowledge is connected to the new constructed meaning. Rosenblatt (1982) states that "the reader, bringing past experience of language and of the world to the task, sets up tentative notions of a subject, of some framework, into which to fit the ideas as the words unfurl" (p. 268). Martin (2003) explains:

The meaning of any text lies not in the print but in the reader's interaction with the words in the page. The reader is involved in a give-and-take relationship with the text, bringing background information, experiences, attitudes, and understandings to the text that influence the understanding he or she builds on the words (p. 289-290).

Drawing on this meaning construction theory, readers are capable of opening broader learning capabilities when they are free to "interact" with the text. Just like Piaget and Vygotsky, Rosenblatt's view of learning is based on the construction of meaning.

Contexts and orientations are important variables in the way second language learning and teaching practices are developed. The assumptions educators have had towards best practices in teaching language have contributed to different viewpoints of how ESL should be taught. Aside from personal beliefs, these assumptions have been drawn from cognitive and psychological theories of learning developed throughout history as will be discussed next.

### **Theories of Learning**

Cognitive and psychological factors play a significant role in the process of second language acquisition and development. According to Brown (2007), the concept of human learning encompasses different aspects to be considered when attempting to understand second language acquisition. He defines these aspects of cognitive nature aimed at setting a framework for understanding human learning. These are entry behavior, learning goals, method or approach used to learn, and evaluation of how learning takes place. Entry behavior implies what a learner already knows, what his/her abilities are, and what his/her motivations, needs, drives, and/or

limitations are. Learning goals define a learner's objectives of a given task or to learning. Methodology or approach refers to alternative ways to implement learning based on entry behavior and learning goals. Evaluation procedures involve strategies to determine if and how learning takes place. Brown further discusses aspects of learning illustrating behaviorist, cognitive, and constructivist learning theories. How these theories have influenced the teaching of ESL to adults and how these relate to the orientations described above is briefly discussed next.

**Behaviorist learning theory.** According to Brown (2007), the concept of learning in the behaviorist view includes the Classical and Operant theories. These two theories were outlined by Pavlov and Skinner respectively. Pavlov is known for his classical conditioning experiment of dog salivation at the tone of a bell (Balkenius & Morén, 1998; Furedy, 2003). Others who adopted Pavlov's classical conditioning theory were John Watson and E.L. Thorndike. Watson coined the term behaviorism and rejected the mentalistic notions of innateness and instinct, while E.L. Thorndike elaborated on the classical conditioning theory with his Law of Effect view (Brown, 2007).

B.F. Skinner, on the other hand, is known as a neo-behaviorist who distinguished between respondent conditioning—what animals do in response to stimuli—and operant conditioning which is contingent upon the environment. His view defined human behavior dependent on stimuli or reinforcers (Salzinger, 2008). His view of punishment was represented by the absence of reinforcement. How did the behaviorist learning theory affect language teaching?

Brown claims that “the classical and operant conditioning models...provided the perfect foundation for the mimicry drills and pattern practices so typical of audiolingual methodology” (p. 111) described above. Behaviorist theories involve the notion of external acquisition of knowledge based on observable stimuli (Boghossian, 2006). From a pedagogical perspective, behaviorist educators tend to *provide* knowledge to students. Griffiths and Parr (2001) describe it as follows:

Audiolingualism tended to view the learner as a passive entity waiting to be programmed. As such, it paid scant, if any, attention to the possibility that learners might have any useful contribution to make to the programming process. If anything, learner attempts to become involved in the learning process were viewed with suspicion, and discouraged on the grounds that conscious intervention on the part of the learner might interfere with the desired automatic response outcome (p. 248).

Freeman and Freeman (1998) claim that “audiolingual lessons are designed to give students intense practice with the language in order to form good habits in the target language” (p. 12). Under this notion, repetitive drilling constituted the behavior that granted human beings the ability to learn a second language.

**Cognitive learning theory.** The cognitive view of learning draws on the notion of instruction through a connection of knowledge. David Ausubel argued that human learning takes place through meaningful processes which involve relating known concepts to new concepts (Brown, 2007). Chomsky’s notion of *transformational-generative grammar* parallels Ausubel’s description of meaningful processes inside the deep structures of humans at the cognitive level

rather than at the surface level. As an integrated mechanism, Ausubel claimed that ideas are linked together in an organized manner (Ivie, 1998). Similarly, Chomsky claims that “learning a language is a natural process and involves developing deep structures and also developing the ability to transform them into the different surface structures” (Freeman & Freeman, 1998, p. 15). Both of their theories contrast rote learning. According to Ausubel, rote learning implies the storage of new concepts without significant relevance to cognitive structures, while meaningful learning involves strong relationship of new and existing structures of knowledge. “If existing cognitive structure is clear, stable, and suitably organized, it facilitates the learning and retention of new subject matter. If it is unstable, ambiguous, disorganized or chaotically organized, it inhibits learning and retention” (Ausubel, 1963, p. 217).

**Constructivist learning theory.** While behaviorist theories involve external stimuli and cognitive views focus on existing knowledge linked to new knowledge, constructivists claim that knowledge is not found, but constructed by individuals who must be involved socially and culturally rather than isolated (Gordon, 2009). This social and cultural involvement for learning derives from a Vygotskian view where the learner and the environment must connect. Piaget’s view of construction of knowledge depends fundamentally on development stages where learners take responsibility of their own learning (Brown, 2007). “Students need to ‘construct’ for themselves knowledge that is new for them. This construction depends not on adopting correct language or formalism, but on working out, for one’s self, relationships that are at play in the situation under study” (Cavicchi et. al, 2009, p. 195). Constructivism has become a school of thought that brings together linguistic, psychological, and sociological ideologies (Brown, 2007).

Under a constructivist view, Windschitl (1999) claims that students need to be actively involved in the learning process and “such experiences include problem-based learning, inquiry activities, dialogues with peers and teachers that encourage making sense of the subject matter, exposure of multiple sources of information, and opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding in diverse ways” (p. 752). As an example, Freeman and Freeman (1998) describe an activity for adult learners where “discussing their situation and planning social action, students learning a second language can use the target language to solve a real problem” (p. 26).

The different orientations and learning theories discussed shape language educators’ teaching practices. In the field of adult ESL, however, the learners’ academic background plays a fundamental role. Bigelow & Tarone (2004) argue that literacy levels must be accounted for in SLA research. As discussed by Mathews-Aydinli (2008), adult ESL learners’ L1 educational background can range from illiteracy to Ph. D. holders, while college or university ESL students generally “share an obvious common need for training in academic English skills” (p. 199). While understanding teaching approaches, learning theories, and ESL students’ L1 academic background is important, it is equally important to review how language and second language learning has been defined in the literature.

### **Competence and Performance**

Language has generally been defined in various ways, some less specific than others. For example, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines language simply as a systematic means of communicating ideas (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2003, p. 699). The American Heritage Dictionary defines language more specifically as communication of thoughts and feelings through a system of arbitrary signals, such as voice sounds, gestures, or written

symbols (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2001, p. 478). The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines language as the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005, p. 862). Brown (2007) describes language as a series of concepts that are systematic, symbolic, vocal and visual, communicative, operational in speech community and culture, essentially human, and acquired by all people in much the same way.

Understanding language can lead one to understand the notion of competence and performance in second language acquisition. Chomsky (1965) makes a distinction between competence and performance. According to him, competence is what a speaker-hearer can do under the best conditions, while performance is the use of language on specific conditions (Lehmann, 2007). Put differently, Chomsky states that competence refers to a person's subconscious knowledge of grammar and other aspects of language, while performance is the way language is actually used (Canale & Swain, 1980). Hymes (2001) describes competence as "the tacit knowledge of language structure" (p. 54), while describing performance as being "concerned with the processes often termed encoding and decoding" (p. 55). Chomsky argues that educators must understand this difference when assessing students. For example, when a newly arrived educated student from Mexico who is capable of understanding and speaking English enrolls in a new school in the U.S., he or she may not necessarily "perform" up to the standards required in the new school due to nervousness or fear. Therefore, his/her competence may be erroneously assessed based on his low "performance."

Hymes perception of competence and performance, however, goes beyond Chomsky's claims. Hymes argues that "social life affects not only outward performance, but also inner competence itself" (Ohno, 2006, p.26). According to Hymes, sociocultural factors play an

important role when identifying competence and performance (ZhonggangGao, 2001). Unlike Chomsky, Hymes claims that we should be conscious of actual use and not simply an idealized speaker-listener situation (Liu, 2008, Ohno, 2006).

Along with the notion of competence and performance, Chomsky further claimed that human beings possess an innate mechanism that allows them to learn aspects of grammar that are similar in all languages. He termed this mechanism, Universal Grammar. According to him, “humans are born with a knowledge of those aspects of grammar common to all languages, and so learning a language consists of deciding on which parts of the Universal Grammar show up in the particular language people around us speak” (Freeman & Freeman, 1998, p. 14-15). Freeman and Freeman (1998) claim that “when linguists say that languages are ‘rule-governed,’ they refer to an innate ability, the knowledge that a sentence sounds right rather than the knowledge of the kinds of grammar rules taught in school” (p. 15). Based on this assumption, all humans have the capability to develop competence in communication or communicative competence.

Communicative competence refers to the ability to use enough language to comprehend and be understood during social interactions (Magnan, 2008). Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) identified five areas of communicative competence: 1) linguistic form, 2) pragmatic/functional competence, 3) propositional content (meaning), 4) interactional patterns, & 5) strategic competence. Hymes defines communicative competence as “knowledge of the rules for understanding and producing both the referential and social meaning of language” (Ohno, 2006, p. 26). He further emphasizes the need to distinguish between linguistic and communicative competence. Canale and Swain defined communicative competence into four components: 1) grammatical competence, 2) discourse competence, 3) sociolinguistic competence, and 4) strategic competence (Liu, 2008). Grammatical competence describes the ability to convey



messages and be understood. According to Canale and Swain, “the study of grammatical competence is as essential to the study of communicative competence as is the study of sociolinguistic competence” (Ohno, 2006, p. 28). Discourse competence refers to the ability to form coherent paragraphs or use near-accurate spoken language. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to apply appropriate language based on the social context. Strategic competence refers to the ability to “repair” or continue communication by using enough language to bring messages across. Code-switching, for example, can be characterized as strategic competence in that it may complement unknown words within phrases from the speaker’s first language in certain informal conversations (Wigglesworth, 2005).

Hymes argues that communicative competence needs to be further subcategorized as linguistic and communicative competence where communicative competence pertains to language functionality, while linguistic competence refers to understanding and producing sentences that are grammatically correct (Ohno, 2006). Drawing on Hymes’ argument, acquiring language may not necessarily indicate that one acquires linguistic competence.

While scholars debate on distinguishing the ability of people to use and properly adapt language in various contexts, adult ESL educators face a similar language debate inside the ESL classroom. A significant controversy is whether adult students in ESL classrooms should be immersed in the TL, viewed by some scholars as a “common sense” practice, or whether students should be allowed to use their L1 during ESL instruction (Huerta-Macias and Kephart, 2009). In the following two sections I will describe both views.

### **English-Only Policy**

Aside from studying the various learning strategies that adequate formal schooled adult learners apply in the ESL classroom, I would also like to understand the perspectives these students have towards the exclusive use of English. In this section I present literature that explains the English-Only paradigm and the views that are presented by those who favor this view.

The use of English and the application of an English-Only policy in the adult ESL classrooms have been accepted by some adult ESL students and educators. Lukes (2009) poses an example from one of her students claiming her desire to learn English at any cost, “Maestra, when I learn English well enough, I am going to stop speaking Spanish forever!” (p. 161). Although Lukes discusses her opposition to an English-Only approach, she explains that many educators support it vehemently. English-Only advocates sell the idea of monolingual instruction to their adult students as “best practice” and push for its implementation. Judd (2000) states that “both adults and children are being told by English-Only supporters to abandon their native languages and adopt English” (p. 172). Lukes (2009) explains:

Some misguided teachers who embrace the “more is better” approach go to such extremes that they tell adult students to stop using their first language and even urge immigrant parents to forego their native language at home in favor of English, ostensibly to benefit their school-aged children. (p. 162).

Arguing against the enforcement of English-Only policies, McCarty (2003) contends that “it is nonetheless important to highlight the singular role of compulsory English-Only schooling in promoting language loss” (p. 148). The rationale for establishing English as both the content

and the medium of instruction in adult ESL classrooms stems from a *common sense* belief that the more they are immersed in it, the more they will acquire it (Auerbach, 2000; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Lukes, 2009;).

Auerbach (1993) explains that even those who oppose English-Only approaches “insist that their students use English as the sole medium of communication....and justify these practices with the claim that use of the L1 will impede progress in the acquisition of English” (p. 10). Wigglesworth (2005) states that educators seek exclusive exposure to English inside the ESL classroom because they “want classroom activities to maximize learners’ use of the target language in order to enhance learners’ opportunities for interaction in their second language and to encourage learning of the target language” (p. 2). Drawing on the argument of Phillipson (1992) regarding English language teaching (ELT), Auerbach discusses tenets that became an unchallenged doctrine in Uganda in 1961. These are outlined below:

- English is best taught monolingually.
- The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker.
- The earlier English is taught, the better the results.
- The more English is taught, the better the results.
- If other languages are used too much, standards of English will drop.

A significant argument for imposing English-Only instruction in adult ESL classrooms is the belief that previous generations that came to this country were able to assimilate and learn English under what Judd (2000) calls the “grandfather myth.” This myth states that “my grandfather came to this country and learned English quickly and without any special help. Why

can't these new immigrants do the same?" (p. 164). Lukes (2009) argues that stories of previous generations in this country still lack supportive evidence. She claims that "arguments like 'it worked for my grandparents' provide merely anecdotal evidence and do not reflect the research upon which language teaching methodology is grounded" (p. 164).

Auerbach (2000) explains that English-Only views derive from the belief that immersion programs should have the same outcome for "adult immigrant or refugee groups" (p. 182). She maintains that immersion programs succeed with students whose L1 is respected and supported at home and in the broader society, as opposed to language-minority students. She contends that research on the effectiveness of L1 use in adult classrooms have been minimal and/or simply ignored. Therefore, she concludes that "enforcing monolingual ESOL instruction for adult learners is based on questionable assumptions and a lack of research evidence" (p. 183).

Cummins (2007) contends that the insistence of using a monolingual approach in second language teaching can be attributed to three assumptions: "a) the target language (TL) should be used exclusively for instructional purposes without recourse to students' first language (L1); b) translation between L1 and TL has no place in the language classroom; and c) within immersion and bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate" (p. 221). Similar to Auerbach's arguments regarding the lack of research evidence for an English-Only approach, Cummins explains that instructional policies that demand a monolingual approach in second language classrooms are unsupported by empirical research. Lukes (2009) further contends that "with an emphasis on English only, classroom practices discount research and programs are designed so that many students fall through the cracks" (p. 166).

Auerbach and Cummins present and discuss arguments against English-Only approaches due to lack of evidence. Wigglesworth (2005), on the other hand, claims that English-Only

initiatives may be due to the fact that “language teaching pedagogy tend to come out of English speaking countries” (p. 2) and, therefore, English-only instruction is seen as the most effective approach to English language learning.

An important achievement in the English-Only agenda was the passage of Proposition 227 in California, and subsequently Proposition 203 in Arizona, and Question 2 in Massachusetts (de Jong, 2008). Supporters of the English-Only approach argue in favor of national unity and quick assimilation. “Providing schooling in a language other than English is thus seen as the barrier that keeps ELLs from succeeding” (De Jong, 2008, p. 352). Crawford (2003) claims that *ignoring* the real purpose of bilingual education is more critical than opposing it. He contends that English-Only supporters “seemed to view bilingual education as a diversion from, rather than a means toward, that end” (p. 147). De Jong presents a quote from the Boston Globe in favor of English-Only initiatives:

Because of transitional bilingual education, too many Spanish-speaking students are segregated from their English-speaking schoolmates, and this has contributed significantly to the abysmal educational results for Hispanic students in Massachusetts: the lowest MCAS scores and the highest drop-out rates among all major racial/ethnic groups (Boston Globe, 10/28/02) (p. 352).

Referring to the Structured English Immersion (SEI) programs mandated under California’s Proposition 227, Garza (2006) points out that the English-Only approach used “not only feeds off and into racist perceptions that Mexicano/Latino students are linguistically and culturally lacking, but it relies on the erroneous assumption that English language instruction is

an essential prerequisite to academic instruction and success” (p. 23). Those who argue against monolingual instruction and the exclusive use of English in the adult ESL classroom offer the alternative of using students’ native language (L1) as an important resource. The notion of using students’ native language (L1) in the adult ESL setting is discussed next.

### **Native Language (L1) Use in Adult ESL**

An important objective of this dissertation study is the significance of adult students’ native language (L1) in the ESL classroom. From both a teaching and learning perspective, students’ L1 can have different roles, even when students share a similar level of native language education. Understanding why students may or may not prefer their native language during ESL instruction can illustrate alternatives of ESL instructional approaches. In this dissertation I would like to understand if and how participants’ L1 influences their ESL learning.

Despite the widely accepted practice of using an English-Only approach in adult ESL classes, extensive research suggests that the use of students’ L1 is far more beneficial (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Bigelow & Tarone, 2004; Cummins, 2007; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Pappamihel et al. 2008; Wigglesworth, 2005). However, most adult ELL’s who lack cognitive development in their first language experience frustration when confronted with monolingual ESL classes. Some children or adult students who come with a more academically advantaged background also experience some difficulty in attaining the academic language necessary for school success (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).

The use of the native language in adult ESL classes may increase the level of literacy skills as they learn English (Auerbach, 2000). Adults who do not possess literacy skills in their native language, struggle to acquire a second language. Auerbach contends that ignoring adults’

literacy needs results in diminishing possibilities of language acquisition success. Collier (1989) claims that, “the lack of continuing first language cognitive development during second language acquisition may lead to lowered proficiency levels in the second language and the cognitive academic growth” (p. 511).

Research findings suggest that adult ELL’s could benefit from increased first language proficiency prior to or during their second language acquisition process. This applies to adults and/or adolescents at the secondary level. Collier (1989), for example, claims that “if academic work in the first language is not continued at home or at school while secondary students are acquiring the second language, there may not be enough time left in high school to make up the lost years of academic instruction” (p. 520). Freeman and Freeman (2001) state that, “bilingual programs can help students develop literacy and academic knowledge in their first language while they are learning English” (p. 157). Malone (2004) describes stages of multilingual education (MLE) program development and sustainability that should include: 1) beginning literacy, 2) fluency, 3) bridging, and 4) on-going education. Table 1 below provides a description of these stages.

**Table 1:**

***Features of Strong Minority Language Education Programs***

Stages	Description
Stage #1- Beginning Literacy	Emphasis is in oral development. The learners (children and adults) are introduced to the skills of reading and writing in their L1. Areas of instruction are based on items related to students’ lives. All instruction is in students’ L1.—
Stage #2 – Fluency	Emphasis is now placed on the acquisition of fluency in reading and writing in students’ L1. The medium of instruction is still L1. During this stage teachers introduce only oral skills in L2.
Stage #3 – Bridging	Once students have acquired literacy in their L1 and have

## Stage #4 – On-Going Education

gained confidence in using L2 orally, the bridge from L1 literacy to L2 literacy begins. This is a critical stage that requires careful attention in program planning & supervision, teacher preparation, and material availability & use.

At this stage, students need to continue learning in both their L1 & L2. Instruction continuation is necessary whether it is in a formal or a non-formal educational setting.

Source: Malone (2004)

Malone (2003) further discusses three new policies that could potentially benefit minority language students. These include: 1) New language and education policy that protect language diversity, 2) New models of development that encourage integration rather than assimilation, & 3) New education programs that allow minority students to learn without sacrificing their heritage languages. She raises the notion of L1 support by claiming:

Research studies have repeatedly demonstrated that a strong foundation in the first language and a carefully planned process of bridging to a new language is an important factor in minority language learners' success in education. The author also cites other studies that found the same results (Malone, 2003, p. 3).

Drawing on Cummins' (1980 & 1981a) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model, it is logical to assume that adult learners are capable of reaching their full potential in second language acquisition and academic performance, provided their first language has reached a high level of academic development and it is acknowledged and considered a resource.

Auerbach (2000) claims that adult ESL classes with native language instruction not only enhance retention and progress, but also facilitate communicative, learner-centered instruction. Native language support and use within the process of acquiring a second language allows adult



ESL students to feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts and doubts. Freeman and Freeman (1998) assert that “when we support students’ first languages, we are building on their strengths and validating them as individuals” (p. 205). Auerbach (1993) further contends that the benefits of using students’ L1 include attracting previously underserved adult students, enhancing retention and progress in English classes, facilitating communicative learner-centered instruction, reducing the affective barriers, developing the habit of thinking in English, and increasing the use of English.

In contrast to Auerbach’s claims, however, Krashen (1981) argues that second language acquisition is significantly affected by first language influence. He argues that students who rely on their L1 indicate that not enough target language acquisition has taken place. “If so, it can be eliminated or at least reduced by natural intake or language use” (p. 67). There are those who believe that English learned through more English equals more English. However, Freeman and Freeman (1998) claim that this is a commonsense assumption and does not hold true.

While Krashen argues that students’ L1 may “interfere” and reflect not enough acquisition of L2, Cummins (2007) claims that there are both linguistic and academic benefits to maintaining students’ L1 as they acquire English. Moreover and most importantly, however, Cummins states that maintaining students’ L1 during their educational experience minimizes the risk of losing communication with parents and grandparents as they develop L1 and L2. Auerbach (2000) contends that “refugees and immigrants themselves, would argue that a key benefit of native-language literacy instruction is that it supports maintenance of the home culture, providing a bridge between the old and the new cultures, which in turn becomes a bridge between generations” (p. 191).

As differences and controversies remain on the best approach to teach ESL to adult learners, it is important to examine what experts in the field of SLA have proposed for best teaching practices. In the next section I present literature on the wide array of theories and models of SLA that have shaped adult ESL teaching practice.

### **Theories of Second Language Acquisition**

In this section I discuss theories of second language acquisition that have been developed by scholars including Krashen, Swain, Schumann, Long, Van Lier, and Cummins. While some scholars declare students' L1 and bilingualism (and/or multilingualism) as important elements in SLA (Sridhar, 1994), others claim that interaction with native speakers (Long, 1983) and the social context (Schumann, 1986) are key to second language learning. By presenting this part of the literature, I attempt to understand the connections that may exist in the way participants in this dissertation study view language learning. While the educational levels of all participants categorize them as adequate-schooled, some may consider the learning context, for example, more important than output production.

I begin with a look at Krashen's second language acquisition theory along with the five interrelated hypotheses (e.g., acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, natural order hypothesis, input hypothesis, & affective filter hypothesis). I continue with Swain's output hypothesis and discuss how it refutes Krashen's comprehensible input theory to a certain extent. Next I discuss Schumann's acculturation theory and describe how it calls for the integration of the learner to the target culture and the importance of his/her willingness to acculturate. I then talk about the interaction hypothesis developed by Long. I discuss how, according to Brown (2007), Long continues and expands Krashen's comprehensible input theory. I continue with

Van Lier's language awareness theory which puts more emphasis on the learner, rather than on the learning process. I conclude with Cummins' different theories and how they relate to bilingualism and L1 use. Cummins' theories include BICS/CALP theory, language interdependence theory, the balance theory, the common underlying proficiency (CUP) theory, the dual iceberg theory, and the threshold theory.

### **Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory**

Just like Chomsky and Cummins, Krashen's hypotheses evolve around the notion that learning takes place through an innate mechanism. He contends that humans possess several subconscious rules that allow them to produce and understand utterances. His theory of second language acquisition integrates five interrelated hypotheses listed as follows (Schütz, 2007):

- The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
- The Monitor Hypothesis
- The Natural Order Hypothesis
- The Input Hypothesis
- The Affective Filter Hypothesis

**Acquisition-learning hypothesis.** The acquisition-learning hypothesis states that *learning* is a conscious process that takes place when we learn grammar rules, while *acquisition* is a subconscious process that takes place when we receive comprehensible input. According to Krashen, acquisition is the process that allows a learner to receive the message and to make sense of it. He claims that:

Acquisition is hypothesized to be subconscious in the sense that while it is happening we are not usually aware of it; our focus is elsewhere, on the message that is being communicated. The results of acquisition are also subconscious—we cannot always describe our acquired knowledge, but, rather, have a “feel” for correctness in a language we have acquired. (Krashen, 1983, p. 43).

The process of *learning* requires learners to focus on language form and formal instruction is necessary to achieve learning a second language. “Conscious learning is ‘knowing the rules,’ or explicit knowledge” (Krashen, 1983, p. 43). According to Krashen, conscious knowledge about the language, e.g., grammar rules, is far less important than acquisition (Schütz, 2007; Krashen, 1983).

**Monitor hypothesis.** When it comes to adult second language acquisition, there are differences in ways language instruction can be approached. Krashen’s distinction between language acquisition and language learning is an example. According to Krashen, *language acquisition* is a subconscious process that requires meaningful interaction in the target language, while *language learning* is a conscious process that concentrates on form (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Krashen, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These two processes make up what Krashen calls the “Monitor Theory” of adult second language acquisition. Under this premise, he claims that “subconscious acquisition appears to be far more important” (Krashen, 1981, p. 1). According to him, the reason for this is because language production is derived from what we

have *acquired* in meaningful and active communication and we use *language form* as a corrective device (Krashen, 1983).

Given the “rules-driven” nature of the learning process, Krashen claims that learners use this conscious knowledge to correct the acquisition of language. This process is known to “monitor” and edit consciously identified errors. “Acquisition is responsible for our fluency in second language, while learning serves only as a Monitor, or editor: we use our conscious knowledge of rules only to make corrections, either before or after we produce our sentence in the second language” (Krashen, 1983, p. 43). According to Krashen, “monitoring” must not be too frequent, as it should only be used to correct minor deviations from normal speech (Schütz, 2007). “Such explicit and intentional learning, according to Krashen, ought to be largely avoided, as it presumed to hinder acquisition” (Brown, 2007, p. 294).

**Natural order hypothesis.** Language features are acquired in a predetermined order that may not correlate with specific teaching patterns. Freeman and Freeman (2004) explain that:

When languages are taught and students attempt to learn language, the sequence seldom matches the natural order of acquisition. This helps explain why students can produce correct sentences in class or do well on a written test but have trouble using the same forms correctly a short time later. (p. 37).

Krashen claims that language will still be learned according to this predictable order. This hypothesis draws from research on morphemes and grammatical structures (Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Krashen, “research is said to have

shown that certain grammatical structures or morphemes are acquired before others in first language acquisition of English, and a similar natural order is found in second language acquisition” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 182). Although there seems to be a minimal difference between the natural order of second and first language acquisition, there is, nonetheless, an order that each follows (Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

**Input hypothesis.** The input hypothesis states that language is acquired when comprehensible input is received, adding to what is already learned. Krashen explains that comprehensible input is what the learner acquires and this allows him/her to progress and improve. The input should be in minimal proportions and constitutes learning plus a little more ( $i + 1$ ), as long as it is not too far beyond, such as ( $i + 2$ ) (Brown, 2007). Input, therefore, is characterized as essential part of language acquisition, not language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Schütz, 2007). Under this theory, Krashen does not recommend second language learners to be taught speaking skills, as these eventually “emerge” as the person gains sufficient linguistic competence through input (Brown, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Krashen (1983), “we acquire, in other words, via *comprehensible input*, by listening or reading for meaning. We do not acquire by practicing speaking. Speaking is now thought to be a result of acquisition, not a cause” (p. 43).

**Affective filter hypothesis.** Affecting variables play an important role and may keep input from reaching the language acquisition device (Krashen, 1983). Affective variables may include anxiety, nervousness, low self-esteem, and negative attitudes towards a language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain that this hypothesis is drawn from research that points to

*affective* or *attitudinal* variables related to SLA. These are *motivation*, *self-confidence*, and *anxiety*. Krashen (1983) explains:

Even with comprehensible input, some acquirers fail to make progress. This is because, we have hypothesized, the input does not reach those portions of the brain that do language acquisition, even if it is understood. This happens when acquirers are overanxious or unmotivated, and results in the presence of an Affective Filter, a mental block that keeps the input out of the LAD (p. 43).

The affective filter hypothesis basically states that learners must always be in a comfortable and relaxed state in order to gain comprehensible input and be receptive to knowledge. According to Krashen, “the best acquisition will occur in environments where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent, or, in Krashen’s terms, in contexts where the ‘affective filter’ is low” (Brown, 2007, p. 295).

### **Output Hypothesis**

In the process of SLA, it has been continuously argued that students must comprehend the material being taught for learning to take place. Krashen’s input hypothesis, for example, has been an important element in this paradigm. Research findings, however, have indicated that simply providing [comprehensible] *input* to learners has not been enough for second language learning to take place (Swain, 2005). These and other findings have instigated the interest on the importance of *output* in second language learning (Beckman, 2008). According to Beckman, further research needs to be undertaken because “emphasis on output (in addition to input) remains largely neglected in practitioner literature; specifically, the emphasis on intentional

planning to create opportunities for student output is lacking” (Beckman, 2008, p. 474).

Although Swain and Lapkin (1995) emphasize the importance of *input* being comprehensible for learners during SLA, they contend that *output* has a similarly important role in allowing learners to be self-corrective as they notice it and evaluate it. They argue that noticing and evaluating *output* stimulates cognitive processes that eventually lead to second language acquisition (Brown, 2007). Nassaji (2010) explains this concept stating that:

When learners participate in interaction and then receive interactional focus on form, such as recasts, on their erroneous utterances, they may compare their original output with the correct form in the feedback and realize that their production differs from the target-like production. Thus, they may notice a gap in their linguistic knowledge...Similarly, when the teacher or an interlocutor requests clarification from learners during communication, learners may be pushed to make their output more accurate or appropriate. (p. 909).

The concept of being “pushed” to produce language output derives from the notion of being simply understood without too much regard to the appropriateness or correctness of expressions produced (Leeser, 2008). However, drawing on the notion of language production and much like Krashen’s view of  $i + 1$ , levels of knowledge are affected when learners are pressured or “pushed” to go a step further from what they already know. Swain and Lapkin (1995) contend that:

Research is beginning to accumulate evidence supporting the theoretical claim that ‘pushing’ learners beyond their current performance level can lead to



enhanced performance, a step which may represent the internalization of new linguistic knowledge, or the consolidation of existing knowledge. (p. 374).

While Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis has proven to be widely accepted, although heavily disputed as well (Brown, 2007), literature on SLA often challenges this to be an exclusive component of language learning. In Krashen's view, output is not a crucial element in the process of learning a second language. In fact, according to Krashen, output skills are generally developed as a consequence of acquiring receptive skills (Saleemi, 1989). In an effort to contradict this claim, Saleemi (1989) argues:

Though it is possible that comprehension is central to SLA, it is not very clear why learner production should be considered peripheral to the process, especially considering that output not only provides practice and feedback but also signals the success of input and the assimilation of the target language behaviour...it appears unreasonable to adhere staunchly to a strong input-only version of the input hypothesis. (p. 183).

Brown (2007) similarly refutes Krashen's *input* theories claiming that "studies, coupled with a great deal of intuitive observation of successful learners, suggest that Krashen's comprehensible input must at the very least be complemented by a significant amount of output that gives credit to the role of the learner's production" (p. 298).

### **Schumann's Acculturation Theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**

Aside from the debates and discussions about the effectiveness of comprehensible input and the significance of language output, SLA literature also presents other aspects of language learning. Schumann, for example, discusses his theory of acculturation made up of social and affective factors (Schumann, 1986). In Schumann's terms, acculturation refers to "the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language (TL) group" (p. 379). Much like Hymes' perception towards the importance of sociocultural factors for both outward and inward competence, Schumann argues that acquisition of the TL is dependent upon the learner's willingness to acculturate. Within his acculturation model, Schumann identifies several factors that may increase or decrease second language learning. The first factor is identified through social dominance. The social aspect of acculturation reflects either distance or proximity of the learner towards the TL. For example, if the second language learner (2LL) is a dominant group, that is, "politically, culturally, technically, or economically superior" (Schumann, 1986, p. 380) than the TL group, then they will not have the urgency to learn the TL. As a result, according to Schumann, this will cause social distance and, therefore, decrease the acquisition of the TL. Similarly, if the 2LL group is the lower or subordinate to the TL group, there will also be social distance that will keep language acquisition from taking place. To demonstrate the concept of social distance, Freeman and Freeman (2004) posed the following example:

The Hmong, a nomadic people from Laos, came to the United States after the war in Vietnam to escape persecution for helping the United States. The first generation settled mainly in Minnesota and central California. Their numbers there were so large that they were able to support one another, buy at stores that catered to them, and live with minimal contact with the mainstream. All these

factors contribute to social distance, and the greater the social distance between the minority group and the mainstream, the less likely that the minority group members will acquire the language of the mainstream culture. (p. 40).

The second factor described by Schumann identifies 3 integration strategies that affect second language learning. These are assimilation, preservation, and adaptation. *Assimilation* reflects a second language learner's desire to abandon his/her life style, beliefs, and values in exchange for those of the TL. The result of assimilation is a much closer relation between the learner group and the mainstream increasing the acquisition of the TL. A greater social distance is created when learners elect *preservation* of their integration strategy. Under preservation, the learner maintains his/her life style, beliefs, and values while rejecting those of the TL group, increasing social distance and making it harder to acquire the TL. *Adaptation* refers to the willingness of the learner to adapt to the life style, beliefs, and values of the TL group. Under the adaptation strategy, however, the learner still maintains his/her life styles, beliefs, and values. As a result, social distance is subject to the extent the learner engages with the TL group.

A third factor that influences second language learning is enclosure. According to Schumann, "enclosure refers to the degree to which the 2LL group and the TL group share the same churches, schools, clubs, recreational facilities, crafts, professions and trades" (p. 381). Interaction by means of these relationships poses low enclosure, thereby increasing TL learning. On the contrary, if the 2LL group and the TL group do not share or interact through these relationships, enclosure increases and TL learning is diminished.

Other social factors for language learning described by Schumann are cohesiveness and size. As in the example by Freeman and Freeman (2004) above, the Hmong group was large and

cohesive enough to uphold intra-group interaction without much need to interact with the TL group. According to Schumann, cohesiveness and size influence and can determine social distance.

Aside from social factors, Schumann's acculturation theory encompasses psychological factors that include motivation, attitude, and culture shock. According to Freeman and Freeman (2004), low motivation students who may also experience negative attitudes towards the culture of the mainstream have lesser chances of acquiring the TL. Culture shock further hinders TL learning progress. Culture shock "can cause disorientation, stress, anxiety and fear....the resulting mental state can produce a powerful syndrome of rejection which diverts energy and attention from second language learning" (Schumann, 1986, p. 383).

### **Interaction Hypothesis**

While Schumann claims that acculturation significantly influences language learning, Long (1983) argues that the key to second language learning is interaction which has to be a negotiated between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS). In his interaction theory, Long identifies two fundamental aspects: *input & interaction*. He refers to input as "the linguistic forms (morphemes, words, utterances)—the streams of speech in the air—directed at the non-native speaker" (Long, 1983, p.127). Under this theory, *input* is an important characteristic of SLA and it follows Krashen's (1982) comprehensible input hypothesis very closely. According to Brown (2007), Long sort of "picked up" where Krashen left off. While Krashen argues that *input* has to be comprehensible for second language learners, Long poses the question of *how* this input can be made comprehensible. According to Long "one way is to modify the interactional structure of discourse through negotiated interaction between speaker

and listener” (Xu, 2010, p. 13). In Long’s terms, the “analysis of interaction means describing the functions of those forms in (conversational) discourse” (Long, 1983, p.127). Brown (2007) further adds that “conversations are excellent examples of the social and interactive nature of communication” (p. 228) and foreign language curricula hardly focus on this area.

Under his interaction hypothesis, Long poses that “modifications to discourse structure (e.g., negotiated interaction and modified input) indirectly facilitate SLA” (Xu, 2010, p. 12). Long (1983, p. 132) proposes several “devices” used by native speakers to modify the interactional structure. These are outlined in Table 2 as follows:

**Table 2**

*Devices Used by Native Speakers to Modify Interactional Structure of NS-NNS Conversation*

STRATEGIES (S) (FOR AVOIDING TROUBLE)	TACTICS (T) (FOR REPAIRING TROUBLE)	STRATEGIES AND TACTICS (ST) (FOR AVOIDING AND REPAIRING TROUBLE)
S1) Relinquish Topic Control	T1) Accept Unintentional Topic Switch	ST1) Use Slow Pace
S2) Select Salient Topics	T2) Request Clarification	ST2) Stress key Words
S3) Treat Topics briefly	T3) Confirm Own Comprehension	ST 3) Pause Before Key Words
S4) Make New topics salient	T4) Tolerate Ambiguity	ST 4) Decompose topic-comment construction
S5) Check NNS’s Comprehension		ST5) repeat own utterances
		ST 6) Repeat other’s utterances

Source: Long (1983)

The application of the above strategies and tactics are represented in conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers. Brown (2007) explains that conversation modifications “include comprehension checks: ‘go down to the subway—do you know the word “subway”?’; clarification/repair requests: ‘Did you say “to the right”?’ or paraphrases: ‘I went to

a party, you know, January 1, I mean, December 31<sup>st</sup>, the night before the first day of the new year”” (p. 305).

In light of its interactional nature, Long’s theory emphasizes a task-based approach to teaching SLA. Teaching language through the use of activities that involves real communication, that carries out meaningful tasks to promote learning, and that uses meaningful language is the ultimate goal of Long’s theory (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Concentrating on the learning setting, Long’s interaction hypothesis “focuses materials and curriculum developers on creating the optimal environments and tasks for input and interaction such that the learner will be stimulated to create his or her own learner language in a socially constructed process” (Brown, 2007, p. 305).

### **Language Awareness Theory**

Continuing with the notion of interaction in SLA, Van Lier presents a similar view of Long’s need of communication engagement between NS and NNS. Van Lier’s perspective, however, goes somewhat beyond Long’s NS-NNS interaction in that the social context plays a key role in the SLA process. According to Van Lier, the learner must follow a path of learning that requires *receptivity*, *access*, *investment* and *commitment* that leads to simultaneous *exposure*, *engagement*, and *intake & proficiency* (Jungwirth, 2002). The end result may be *perception*, *cognition*, *mastery*, and *creativity* in the use of language. Put differently, Van Lier describes what he terms *language awareness*. Drawing on Vygotsky’s view of social involvement for language learning, Van Lier discusses principles of *awareness*, *autonomy* and *authenticity* (Jungwirth, 2002; Brown, 2007) as basic features for language curricula. Under these principles, Van Lier argues that learners need to be the main actors in the classroom and must also be

regarded as individuals capable of interpreting, analyzing, and engaging in authentic learning. According to Van Lier and in contrast to Long's and Krashen's view, learners must be exposed and engage in language rather than wait and receive comprehensible input (Jungwirth, 2002). Van Lier's language awareness theory's relevance to Long's acculturation theory lies on the importance that the social contexts provide to the learner, not the learning process. While Long's and Krashen's emphasis is on the input of the material to be exposed to the learner, Van Lier's focus is more on how the learner reaches the material to be learned.

Much more concerned with how our surroundings affect language learning, "Van Lier has brought the concept of ecology into applied linguistics" (Swain, 2008, p. 3). Van Lier poses that "the concept of ecology embraces not only the context of classroom learning but, more fundamentally, the very definitions of language, of development, and of mind" (Van Lier, 1997, p. 783). He claims that "an ecological perspective is at its core a world view, a way of being and acting in the world that has an impact of how we conduct our lives, how we relate to others and to the environment, and of course also, how we conceive of teaching and learning" (Van Lier, 2004, p. 86). He discusses "perception" from the learner as an important tool that guides the learning process in a dimension that surpasses simply taking linguistic information. In Van Lier's terms, aside from language characteristics, perception encompasses the role the environment plays in the learning process. In sum, he emphasizes the significance of the surroundings of the learner by suggesting that "perception goes far beyond noticing linguistic features (phonology, morphology, rule-governed syntax), and therefore SLA research on noticing and focusing on form misses a number of crucial aspects of perceptual work" (p. 91).

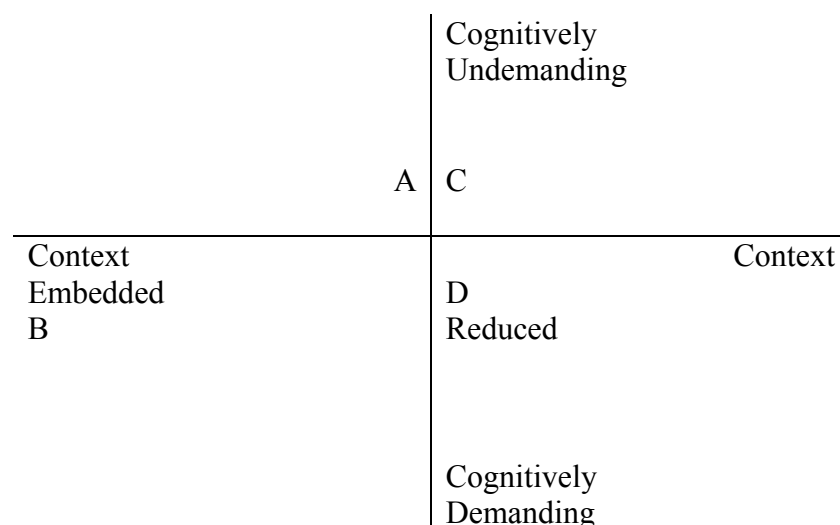
After discussing Van Lier's Language Awareness theory which emphasizes a proactive role of the learner to become responsible for his/her own learning, Long's Interaction Hypothesis

which calls for an interaction negotiation of native and nonnative speakers, Schumann's Acculturation Theory which focuses on learners' need to integrate in the target society, and Swain's Output Hypothesis advocating for the importance of the learner's oral production, I now turn to Cummins' theories and discuss their relevance to bilingualism and the importance of students' L1 in SLA. As an aspect of one his theories (i.e., BICS/CALP), Cummins identifies communicative skills that are generally *acquired* by adult learners in many adult ESL programs. Aside from communicative skills acquired, however, the participants in this dissertation study seek, aside from oral proficiency, academic language skills which they will need as they move on to college.

### **BICS/CALP**

Students learning a second language may gain conversational language abilities and/or academic language skills. According to Cummins, BICS refers to the ability to communicate in context-embedded situations where gestures, hand movement, body language, and other contextual support is provided (Baker, 2007; Collier, 1987; Cummins, 2003; Freeman & Freeman, 2002). CALP, on the other hand, is the ability to communicate and engage in context reduced situations where analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are required (Baker, 2007; Collier, 1987; Freeman & Freeman, 2002). Figure 1 below shows BICS and CALP along two axes, contextual support and the level of cognitive demands (Paciotto, 2000).





**Figure 1 Cummins' Quadrants**

First, Cummins describes the horizontal axis for contextual support as other context embedded communication or context reduced communication. Context embedded communication along the horizontal axis refers to contextual support, generally from body language through pointing, hand movement, gestures, movement of eyes, and tone of voice (Baker, 2007). Context reduced, on the other hand, refers to the exclusive use of words to convey meaning. Cognitively demanding communication refers to the need to process challenging information quickly, while cognitively undemanding communication refers to the mastery of sufficient language skills to carry out a simple conversation (Baker, 2007).

Cummins' BICS and CALP theories have been a significant source for explaining the unsuccessful experiences of language minority students (Baker, 2007). A significant misinterpretation pertaining to the BICS and CALP theories, however, is that students who acquire adequate communicative fluency (BICS) in the second language (e.g., English in the U.S.) are thought to also possess the skills (CALP) to undertake regular academic courses entirely in the second language. Paciotto (2000) explains:

Proficiency in conversational skills—developed through conversation with peers—is often expected to predict proficiency in academic discourse—developed through academic tasks. When this expectation is in place, and second language learners possessing peer-appropriate proficiency in conversational language score at low levels on school standardized (cognitively-demanding) tests, the low scores are interpreted as indicating learning disabilities instead of a student's lack of academic language proficiency. This misinterpretation causes minority students to be inappropriately placed in special education classes (p. 47).

Research studies support the BICS/CALP distinction. Cummins (1981a), for example, cites a study by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1976) where Finnish immigrant children's Swedish oral fluency did not reflect sufficient proficiency in cognitive/academic aspects. Although these Finnish children were orally proficient in Swedish according to their parents and teachers, their cognitive/academic skills needed to be developed. In a similar study, he cites Genesee (1976) describing Anglophone students in grades 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 11<sup>th</sup> in a French immersion program. In this study the author reported that the participants' IQ was related to French academic proficiency, but not to oral productive skills. Genesee claimed that:

The exception was pronunciation at the grade 4 level which was significantly related to IQ. Listening comprehension (measured by a standardized test) was significantly related to IQ only at the grade 7 level. (Genesee cited in Cummins, 1981a, p. 134).

Other research studies indicate that it takes two years to develop BICS, while CALP requires at least five years (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Freeman & Freeman, 2002 & 2004; Paciotto, 2000;). Cummins makes reference to the Ramsey and Wright study of 1974 which involved over 1,200 immigrant students in the Toronto school system (Cummins, 1981a). This study was conducted using Picture Vocabulary Text (PVT) and results were categorized based on Age on Arrival (AOA) and Length of Residence (LOR). The results are described as follows:

Clearly, it takes considerably longer for immigrant students to develop age-appropriate academic skills in English (five-seven years LOR) than it does to develop certain aspects of age-appropriate English communicative skills (approximately two years). (Cummins, 1981a, p. 9).

According to Cummins, students who only develop enough communicative abilities generally lack academic language proficiency which eventually leads to poor academic performance and ultimately academic failure.

### **Interdependence Hypothesis**

While the difference between BICS and CALP is important for second language acquisition, it is also important to account for other aspects of language learning, such as students' first language development. According to some scholars, such as Cummins (2007), Auerbach (1993), Judd (2000), Baker (2007), Wigglesworth (2005), among many others, students' first language has an active role in second language acquisition. Students' first language proficiency is a strong predictor of English academic development (Thomas & Collier,

2002). Cummins (1979) explains that “the initially high level of L1 development makes possible the development of similar levels of competence in L2” (p. 233). Drawing on the notion of universal grammar advanced by Chomsky (1979) that states that people transfer skills learned in L1 to L2 in a natural way, Jiang & Kuehn (2001) contend that “the level of proficiency reached in L1 influences the development of their proficiency in L2” (p. 655). Freeman and Freeman (1998) claim that, “the development of students’ first languages leads to faster acquisition of English as well” (p. 196).

To describe the relationship between first language and the target language, Cummins (1981) developed his *interdependence hypothesis*. This hypothesis is described as follows: “To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly” (Cummins, 1981, p. 29). With this hypothesis, Cummins proposes “that the level of L2 competence which a bilingual child attains is partially a function of the type of competence the child has developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure of L2 begins” (Cummins, 1979, p. 233). This hypothesis refers to a student’s ability to transfer first language skills to the language skills of the second language (Castilla, Restrepo, & Perez-Leroux, 2009; Cummins, 1979). In support of this idea, Cummins draws on research from McNamara, Svarc, and Horner (1976) who claim that:

No differences in English achievement were observed between grade 6 English-speaking children attending French-medium and English-medium schools despite the fact that the children in French schools received no instruction in English until grade 3 or grade 5. Also, there was no evidence that beginning English reading

instruction in grade 3 rather than grade 5 made any difference to the grade 6 scores. (cited in Cummins, 1979, p. 233-234).

Other research described by Cummins that supports the interdependence hypothesis includes a study by Ramirez and Politzer (1976). In this study, the authors “reported that use of Spanish at home resulted in higher levels of Spanish skills at no cost to English achievement while the use of English at home resulted in a deterioration of Spanish skills but no improvement in English” (p. 236). Cummins also makes reference to Swain (1978) and her findings that state that “children in immersion programs achieve levels of L2 reading skills equivalent to native speakers by the end of elementary school” (cited in Cummins, 1979, p. 234). These and other studies support the notion that progression in L2 is dependent on retention and continued development of L1.

Jiang & Kuehn (2001) contend that “the study of language transfer strategies may help us to better understand the positive influence first language knowledge has in the learning of another language” (p. 655). Further discussing the interdependence hypothesis and its cross-linguistic nature, Dominguez de Ramírez and Shapiro (2007) state that, “the process of transfer is possible because the acquisition of a second language is thought to be mediated by the level of linguistic competence in the first language” (p. 795-796). In their study involving 68 students in grades first to fifth, they found that “results revealed positive and significant correlations across languages and across grades, except for fourth grade. Children who read more fluently in Spanish were more likely to read more fluently in English” (p. 802). Based on this assumption it can be inferred that the more the first language is developed, the easier it becomes to develop the second language (Baker, 2007).

**Balance Theory**

The notion of language transfer has not been an entirely accepted concept. An opposing view of Cummins' language developmental interdependence hypothesis is the balance theory. This theory is described by Baker (2007) as a naïve theory which states that the human brain has the ability to acquire a second language through a mechanism that acts like a weighing scale. According to this theory, two languages can be acquired, although the increase of one results in the decrease of the other inside the linguistic scale of the brain. An example of this theory can be interpreted in terms of language building blocks. In other words, if languages learned could be represented with the weight of building blocks, adding more English building blocks to the brain scale without evenly reinforcing—or adding—Spanish, for example, building blocks would result in unbalanced cognitive conflict.

**Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model**

In direct contrast to the SUP model, Cummins (1980, 1981a) also defined the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model. This model explains that there is a common central knowledge unit in the brain that can receive content instruction provided the language used for such learning is well developed (Baker, 2007; Cummins, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Pappamihel, Nishimata, & Mihai, 2008). According to this model, knowledge acquired in one language can be easily transferred to a second or more languages without the need to re-teach the same material in the new language (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). For example, teaching a student a math calculation in his/her native language will not require the teacher to teach the math calculation again, but to simply identify the

appropriate academic terminology in the target language. Drawing on this conclusion, an adult ELL who understands—or is taught—grammatical structures in his/her first language would be able to learn the language forms in English by transferring the information to English.

Cummins identified six components that build up the theory behind the CUP model (Baker, 2007): 1) Regardless of the language, there is a central engine of thought, 2) human beings have the capacity to be bilingual and multilingual because the brain can store two or more languages, 3) individuals possess the skills for processing information in one or two well-developed languages because the information is retained in the same central processor of the brain, 4) the language used in the classroom must be well-developed to process the cognitive challenges of the classroom, 5) sufficiently developed speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in the first or second language enhance the development of the cognitive system, whereas an insufficiently developed first or second language produces weak oral and written results, and 6) when one or the two languages are not fully functional because of the pressure to establish one over the other, cognitive and academic performance is negatively affected.

Cummins' CUP model reaffirms the importance of providing comprehensible learning material using students' native language so that it can transfer to the target language. Drawing on this model, comprehensible material in the students' first language through a bilingual instructional approach, in adult ESL classes for example, increases the possibilities of both communicative and academic competence (Jiang, & Kuehn, 2001).

### **The Dual Iceberg Analogy**

Cummins further summarized his idea of CUP with the Iceberg analogy (Baker, 2007). This analogy identifies two languages as superficially different above the surface. The two

languages resemble two icebergs that produce different individual language output. Underneath the surface, the central operating system of the brain or CUP, functions as the sole driving source that connects and supplies knowledge to both languages. Chomsky's TGG (Chomsky, 1959; Freeman & Freeman, 1998) notion of deep structure in language learning parallels Cummins' Iceberg analogy. According to Chomsky, an innate mechanism shapes the outward language production or language competence. Just like Cummins' Iceberg analogy, Chomsky claimed that language learning is rooted in a central processing system found deeper than the surface structures. The Iceberg analogy reinforces the concept of a knowledge foundation that can increase with adequate first and/or second language development.

### **The Thresholds Theory**

As language and thought became the focus of study under the cognitivist view, researchers such as Cummins, Diaz, Hakuta, Duncan and DeAvila, and Swain studied the relationship between language and cognition (Lee, 1996). In an effort to distinguish this relationship, for example, Cummins proposed the Thresholds Theory, which aimed at defining the different levels of language competence (Baker, 2007). The first threshold basically identifies limited bilinguals—students with low proficiency in their first and second languages—whose cognitive levels are relatively low. The second threshold identifies the level where positive results and more benefits of bilingualism are apparent.

Baker describes the Threshold Theory as a house with three floors. The first floor represents the level of students whose competence in the first or second language is not adequately developed. As a consequence, students in this category are academically challenged and do not perform well in school. In the second floor, students possess competency in only one



language. Partially bilingual students may function in the classroom using their more developed language, but they are unlikely to have major cognitive differences than monolingual students. The third floor identifies a category of students who have age-appropriate competency in two or more languages. This category reflects more of a balanced bilingual student—a student who has equal fluency in two languages—who can easily demonstrate more cognitive advantages over monolingual students. The underlying concept is that the more competency and development in two languages, the better the academic performance.

Although Cummins's Threshold Theory explained the relationship between L1 and L2 proficiency and cognitive development, it was also criticized for its apparent bias in bringing up results utilizing high achieving subjects (Lee, 1996). For instance, it was argued that some of these studies did not account for low socioeconomic students and this limited the validity of this theory. Drawing from a Vygotskian view, Garcia (1985) argued that society was a key element to the development of intellectual abilities. Other researchers, however, supported the rationale of the Threshold Theory with further research and findings that suggested a positive relationship between cognitive development and L1 and L2 proficiency (Lee, 1996). As an example, Lee cites a study done by DeAvila and Duncan (1979) who analyzed tests of cognitive ability of Hispanic children with different levels of bilingualism. In this study, students were categorized into proficient bilinguals, partial bilinguals, monolinguals, limited bilinguals, and late language learners. According to these findings, "the most proficient subjects, i.e., the proficient bilinguals, performed significantly highest on all measures of cognitive ability, with no differences among the partial bilinguals, monolinguals, and limited bilinguals" (Lee, 1996, p. 508).

Much of the research presented and many of the teaching models described emphasize the importance of considering students' L1. In the adult ESL context, Cummins' CUP model

describing the usefulness of students L1 as they learn L2 aligns with Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis if adult ESL students' L1 is used during their language acquisition process.

Although Krashen emphasizes *acquisition* as opposed to *learning* a second language, Cummins CUP theory suggests that the human brain allows students not only to acquire, but also to "learn" a second language. Cummins claims that:

Information processing skills and educational attainment may be developed through two languages as well as through one language. Cognitive functioning and school achievement may be fed through one monolingual channel or equally successfully through two well developed language channels. Both channels feed the same central processor. (Baker, 2007, p. 170).

After my discussion on language learning, language development, and the relationship between L1 and L2 in SLA, I'd like to turn now to a description of adult ELLs and how some legislation against the use of L1 in the ESL setting has influenced adult English language learning.

### **English Language Learners**

In this section I discuss differences in adult ESL students. Educational level and academic background of adult ESL students is only one characteristic that distinguishes how and for what purpose they need to learn English as a second language. Closely related to their educational background, another important difference is their socioeconomic status, as some may have come to the U.S. as refugees and others as business people or continuing students. I discuss

English language learners in this part of the literature because the participants in this dissertation study make up only one of several categories of students. Although I concentrate on adequate formal learners in this study, it is also important to describe other types of adult learners that have specific characteristics and that may have different educational needs.

I begin with an overall description of adult ELLs. I then present some of their different characteristics, including linguistic background and educational levels. I continue describing some of the obstacles they face when they try to go to school. I conclude by discussing their prior knowledge and how this impacts their ESL learning.

### **Types of English Language Learners (ELLs)**

Adult English language learners come from different backgrounds, nationalities, and for different reasons. This population is generally made up of “adult immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, and naturalized citizens studying nonacademic English as a second language” (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 198). Buttarro and King (2001) state that “students in adult ESL classes differ dramatically in their linguistic, cultural, educational, and employment backgrounds, and in the knowledge, skills, and information they bring to the classroom” (p. 42). Adult ELL’s can also be made up of international students whose L1 education may range from preliterate to doctorate-level (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008; Lukes, 2009). According to Mathews-Aydinli, the needs of these students also range from literacy in both L1 and L2 to preparation courses for university studies. Furthermore, ELL’s may also fall into the college and university category. Mathews-Aydinli describes this category as follows:

ESL students in colleges and universities tend to fall into a more limited age range, can be counted on as having at least a high school-level education and a

reasonably advanced level of literacy in their native language, and as college or university students, share an obvious common need for training in academic English skills. (p. 199).

Whether they are in this country temporarily or permanently, adult students display characteristics that are used by the government, organizations, or schools to categorize and label them. These are discussed in the next sub-section.

### **Characteristics of Adult ELLs**

Although ELL's are usually labeled under a single category, they display distinct characteristics that differentiate them from one another. According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2008), some of these characteristics include living in homes where English is spoken; living in homes where English is not spoken; being stigmatized for speaking English, for not speaking English, or for speaking English differently or with an accent; being high academic achievers; and being marginalized for low academic achievement. As a result, English language learners belong to no single category, as their backgrounds, cultures, and educational levels will vary. Buttaro and King (2001) describe them as follows:

They may be recently arrived refugees, immigrants who have been here for several years, or long-term residents whose families have lived in the U.S. for generations. They may (a) come from a culture with limited literacy tradition, for example, a preliterate culture; (b) they may have been exposed to minimal literacy through a few years of education; or (c) be quite literate and educated in their first

and other languages, but still need to add English (and sometimes a new writing system or alphabet) to their repertoire. (p. 42-43).

Although many of these students are immigrant children and adults, there are many who have lived in the United States for over a generation according to the National Council of Teachers of English (2008). As described by NCTE, 57 percent of adolescent ELL students were born in the U.S., while 43 percent were born outside of the U.S. The NCTE report states that there was a 70 percent ELL growth between 1992 and 2002.

Freeman and Freeman (2009) describe three types of ELL's: The newly arrived with formal schooling, the newly arrived with interrupted schooling and the long-term English learners. First, newly arrived immigrant English learners who come with adequate formal education from their native countries bring with them a knowledge base from which to draw and scaffold English language learning. Second, newly arrived ELL's with interrupted or limited schooling do not possess sufficient native language schooling to rely on for their English language learning. Finally, individuals who have lived in the U.S. for at least seven years fall into the category of ELL students known as Long-Term English Language Learners (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). The newly arrived adult learners who possess adequate formal education will be the focus of this dissertation study.

While the characteristics of adult ELL's place them in different categories, many confront difficulties in achieving their ultimate goals of learning the English language. Some of the obstacles faced by adult ELL's are discussed next.

**Obstacles Faced by Adult ELLs**

Although adult ESL students' labels and characteristics may vary, barriers to obtain an ESL education are generally shared by many of them. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement, for example, found that the most common barriers included time, money, and childcare (Tucker, 2007). According to Tucker, older learners had a much more difficult time keeping up with the class pace, while others had memory impairment and/or were illiterate. He further claims that:

The average adult ESL student is among the working poor, holds two jobs, supports a family, and learns English in the few hours available in the evening. There is no shortage of motivation to learn. Instead, the extreme demands for ESL services far exceed the available supply of open classes. (p. 32).

Although many of these barriers are difficult to overcome, the persistence and motivation of many adult students continues to drive them into the adult ESL classrooms. While Tucker's description of the average adult ESL student reflects the typical working class person, this characteristic reflects the acquisition of skills that have been acquired throughout their life experiences. In the next section, I discuss prior knowledge which constitutes one of adult learners' biggest assets.

**Prior Knowledge**

Despite barriers to education, adult ESL learners draw on prior knowledge. Wlodkowski (2008) states that adult students are *pragmatic* learners. He claims that adult learners use what

they have learned, generally from their work experience, and apply this knowledge to their school learning. Cummins (2007) contends that “Prior knowledge refers not just to information or skills previously acquired in a transmission-oriented instructional sequence but to the totality of the experiences that have shaped the learner’s identity and cognitive functioning” (p. 232). According to Wlodkowski “adults have a strong need to apply what they have learned and to be competent in that application, and institutions and employers have a pressing need for more knowledgeable and skilled workers” (p. 97). Schwarzer (2009) discusses students’ experiences as follows:

Adult learners bring a lifetime of knowledge and experience to the ESL class. They bring specialized knowledge from their professions and occupations. It is not unusual for ESL learners to have practiced as well-educated professionals (doctors or teachers) or skilled tradespersons in their countries of origin. (p. 32).

According to Cummins (2007), “if students’ prior knowledge is encoded in their L1, then their L1 is clearly relevant to their learning even when instruction is through the medium of L2” (p. 231). Sooner or later, however, adult learners are introduced to ESL programs that either allow the use of students’ L1 during their instruction or enforce an English-Only policy.

Adult ELLs display different characteristics that may distinguish them from one another. When it comes to the adult ESL classroom, however, these differences may turn insignificant and unite learners. Wlodkowski (2008) explains that “a sense of community with which all learners can identify establishes the foundation for inclusion” (p. 127). In spite of learner unity inside the adult ESL classroom, an important aspect of the adult education context is the

perception of how this field fits in society. In discussing this further, important viewpoints are presented in the next section.

### **The Political and Social Context**

In this section I discuss the position many Americans have towards teaching approaches that consider and respect the culture and language of students whose native language is not English. I also present the reaction of scholars and educators who advocate for measures that support bilingualism and multilingualism in schools. An important aspect of this dissertation study is learning how participants view themselves and how valuable they perceive their own language as a source for learning English. As a researcher and future scholar, I am interested in knowing how participants feel about assimilation and whether or not they consider that their native language should be surrendered and replaced with English.

The notion that all-English instruction—for both children and adults whose native language is not English—is the best route towards assimilation to the American society has been accepted by many educators and members of the general public (Auerbach, 2000). Wiley (2002) claims that the ideology of English as the common language of the land in the United States surpasses the belief that members of minority groups should have the right to retain their own language and heritage. The general view of those who advocate for the quick assimilation of immigrants and members of minority groups coming to this country is grounded on the political view that to be an American one must surrender his/her language, heritage, and culture (Judd, 1987). Wiley and Lukes (1996) contend that “language, like race and ethnicity, can be used as a marker of social and political status. Similarly, language prejudice is not unlike other forms of prejudice and may work in conjunction with them” (p. 518).



When it comes to research on second language acquisition (SLA), a sense of injustice is seldom noted or expected. Wiley and Lukes (1996) state, however, that “second language acquisition (SLA) research—true to its name—tends to concentrate only on the L2, that is, English, with little concern for the fate of the maintenance or development of the L1” (p. 514). They discuss how research has traditionally placed emphasis on the learner and on how to shape his/her perception of learning the TL, thereby ignoring how he/she is treated or what status is given to him/her by the dominant group. Lewis (1978, as cited in Wiley and Lukes, 1996), discusses the vulnerability of the non-educated learner claiming that:

Low educational achievement is blamed on the backgrounds of those who fail rather than on the programs in which the failure occurs. In other words, there is an attempt to correct individual deficiencies rather than to reform the educational system. (p. 517).

Judd (2000) further contends that the failure of adult ESL learners exposed to untrained professionals and unsupported ESL programs imposing English-Only should be attributed to those responsible for such programs. Along with Lewis, he argues that learners are not necessarily the cause of unsuccessful learning outcomes. He goes beyond program structure and administration, however, to describe how policy and the government play a role in this issue. He concludes that:

It is much easier to blame the victims, both qualified ESL teachers and serious ESL learners, than to address the root causes of the problems—quick-fix educational ‘solutions’ that are not reported by educational wisdom delivered by

teachers who are not professionally trained...English-Only serves to divert attention from difficult issues facing U.S. politicians, such as loss of jobs, uncertainty in the economic system, crime, lower educational performance, etc., and turn the blame for these issues onto immigrants. It is certainly far easier and cheaper to blame immigrants and non-English speakers than to propose serious legislation to deal with these problems. (p. 172-173).

As a result of poorly implemented and generally underfunded ESL programs in adult education, according to Judd, it is not uncommon for adult students to accept the blame for their failure. Wiley and Lukes (1996) contend that “in the U.S., immigrant and native-born language minorities have been particularly vulnerable to the ideology of blame, and language differences have been used as one of the principal means of ascribing a deficit status to them” (p. 517). In his argument about immersion programs in the U.S., Crawford (2002) discusses the unpleasant experiences of second language learners and how these are drawn from a more politically-driven agenda. He maintains that:

Second-language learners are simply thrown to the mercies of a teacher, classmates, and instructional materials in the second language, with no concessions to their language or cultural needs. This sometimes occurs very cynically, where the needs could be met, but they are not because of political reasons. (p. 378).

In discussing whether anti-bilingualism is a result of “racism” or “ignorance,” Crawford (2003) contends that “favoring immersion is one thing; banning native-language instruction is quite another” (p. 147). Cummins (2007) claims that “for many generations, bilingual students had been punished for any use of their L1 in the school context and were discriminated against in virtually all areas of education, from segregated schools to biased curriculum and assessment practices” (p. 109). An example is posed by Wiley and Lukes (1996) as to the way that even course descriptions are often subject to marginalization and degeneration and how students with limited English proficiency are stereotyped. They explain this concept by stating that:

It is important to be aware of the operational labels that practitioners often apply to their students. Some faculty and students may refer to such a course as “bonehead English” or “dumbbell” English. Courses such as these are intended as gatekeepers for students who are considered “underprepared” or, less euphemistically, those who “don’t belong” in the university. In professional jargon, many of the students are likely to be “nonnative” speakers of English or students of “limited” English proficiency...Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the composition of such courses is that students are assigned to them based solely on their English test scores without consideration of their diverse individual linguistic backgrounds (p. 513).

The argument presented by Wiley and Lukes clearly defines a discriminatory view of college or university students whose first language is not English. From the authors’ perspective, remediation is the label or title given to the status of those students who “need assistance”

because their English language skills level is not equivalent to English native speakers. They discuss and reflect on 2 ideologies: 1) English monolingualism and 2) Standard English in the United States. According to Wiley and Lukes, these ideologies reflect English monolingualism as a norm, while Standard English is regarded as the “literate” and “unaccented” language of the land.

The opposing view people have towards bilingualism or the use of students’ L1 in ESL classrooms in the U.S. may be attributed to the confusion between bilingualism and patriotism. During the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “English was associated with patriotism—speaking ‘good’ English was equated with being a ‘good’ American” (Baron, 1990, p. 155, as cited in Auerbach, 1993). According to Crawford (1992), the idea of allowing the use of languages other than English in education makes a person “un-American,” while at the same time threatens the unity of this country.

Those who favor monolingualism in the U.S. feel that the American views and culture are legitimate and all other cultures are inferior and less worthy (Baker, 2007). According to Baker the suppression of minority languages in schools and in society is generally driven by politicians and those in power. In discussing the English Language Amendment of 1984 (ELA), for example, Judd (1987) claims that:

In general, though, advocates of the ELA do not support cultural pluralism; they see the melting pot as the ideal American philosophy and goal. They seem to fear that if non-English speaking communities flourish, the United States runs the risk of encouraging political disunity and even potential disintegration. (p. 118).

Malone (2004) discusses 2 reasons that are usually used to justify avoiding the use of students' L1. First, "Supporting diversity will foster divisiveness and lead to ethnic conflict" (p. 7). The impression is that linguistic diversity leads to problems, whereas a single language promotes national unity. According to Malone, however, it is generally the opposite when the flexibility or freedom to use one's native language is restricted. She describes examples of this concept as follows:

Consider the Bangladeshis who fought a war and gained independence over the issue of language, the Lithuanians, whose anger over the mandatory use of Russian in their schools was an early factor leading to the break with the Soviet Union or the Basques and Catalonians who are even now agitating against what they perceive as linguistic and cultural imperialism. Compare those situations with Papua New Guinea where the government has initiated early education in over 300 of the country's 820 languages. PNG celebrates its diversity rather than considering it a problem. (p. 8).

Second, "Learning in one's first language will mean less success in learning a second language" (p. 8). Malone explains that this statement is grounded on the belief that exposing the learner to more L2 instruction is better, even if the learner does not speak it or understand it at the beginning. She contends that exposing students to this model of learning makes no pedagogical sense and implies that educators who favor it must have other reasons for opposing L1 use. Malone's rationale parallels Auerbach's (2000) opposition to the exclusive use of L2 when she argues that "these taken-for-granted beliefs in adult education regarding the inclusion

or exclusion of learners' native languages are as much political choices as pedagogical ones" (p. 178).

The continued struggle to retain the all-English philosophy in education has influenced some educators who favor bilingualism to still pursue total English immersion for adult ESL learners claiming that it is the quickest way to language acquisition (Auerbach, 2000). Under this assumption, according to Auerbach, students' first language is politically viewed as having no function and, thus, no role in education or society. Her argument involves the relation of power and language use in education. She draws on Fairclough (1989) to describe consent versus force claiming that power is exercised by forcing students or by convincing them what is in their best interest. Based on this theory, adult ESL learners are sold on the belief that in order for them to succeed in this country they must learn English as quickly as possible and at any cost. Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) explain:

A language policy is basically monolingual when it linguisticistically allocates resources primarily to one language and correspondingly idolizes and glorifies this dominant language while demonizing, stigmatizing, and rendering invisible other languages. The ideological under- pinning involves a rationalization of the relationship between dominant and dominated, always to the advantage of the dominant, making the learning of the dominant language at the cost of other languages seem not only instrumentally functional but beneficial to and for the dominated. (p. 437).

From a political view, education where the use of students' L1 is supported has undergone substantial attack and opposition. A clear example of this is Proposition 227, which clearly banned bilingual programs and imposed English-only programs in public schools (Crawford, 2003; Cummins, 2007). According to Crawford (2003), surveys, the media, and advocacy groups played an important role in feeding the erroneous rationale of bilingual programs in schools and the general public. He explains that:

Explanations of how bilingual education works are seldom available. Few voters have any direct contact with programs for English learners; they rely on information that is second-hand, superficial, and often erroneous...ignorance about the subject is a more important factor" (p. 147).

Based on inaccurate information, education reforms, such as Proposition 227 of California, emerged as a resource to tackle the "threat" to our national identity. Coupled with the misconception of bilingual education as a linguistic risk, advocates of English-Only campaigns push for monolingualism in public schools and in society without regard to linguistic rights of minority groups. In the next section I discuss the notion of language survival, language extinction, and language rights.

### **Language Rights**

Historically, the right to use a native language has been affected since the early years of the twentieth century, when even slaves were banned from some kind of identity or even education. The rights of languages to coexist are being threatened in modern times. According

to McCarty (2003), with the evolution of technology, the on-going information exchange, and the emergence of countries as first-world nations, that survival of local languages is less likely to occur. She claims that:

The world's linguistic and cultural diversity is under assault by the forces of globalisation—cultural, economic and political forces that work to standardise and homogenise, even as they stratify and marginalise. (p. 147).

The segregation and marginalization of languages has been experienced in different parts of the world. Malone (2003), for example, makes a strong claim regarding the segregation of minority languages in the Asian continent that are visible particularly in education when she states:

Almost one third of the world's 6000 languages are spoken in Asia. A study of language and education policies and practices in the region, however, reveals that in most countries, a limited number of languages are associated with power and privilege, while the rest are merely tolerated, ignored, or actively suppressed. Nowhere are these differences more clear than in education. (p. 1).

Wiley (2002) discusses the issue of language rights as human rights in minority groups, basing his arguments on the fact that language is a right of human identity. He claims that "rights and privileges have been distributed *selectively* based on the recognition of legal status" (p. 89). As an example, he makes reference to California's Proposition 187, which claimed that health and education rights "should be restricted to citizens and legal residents" (pg. 89).



The right to use a language includes the right to conserve it. Language conservation is fundamentally a necessary nutrient in cultural and heritage identity. As an example, Ostler (1999) discusses language conservation as critically as the extinction of endangered mammals and birds. According to her, a language becomes endangered or moribund the moment children stop learning it. McCarty (2003) further claims that “language loss and revitalisation are human rights issues. Through our mother tongue, we come to know, represent, name, and act upon the world. Humans do not naturally or easily relinquish this birthright” (p.148).

Languages are crucial components of world communities. Pupavac (2006) states that “a language is seen as an essential part of a community’s identity and self-esteem, which in turn is seen as crucial to securing a community’s well-being and fostering harmonious relations between communities and preventing violent conflict” (p. 62). On the contrary, the stigmatized idea of imposing a dominant language over native languages stimulates a sense of low self-esteem and inferiority. Patten (2009) discusses minority speakers’ rights and the state’s responsibility to address them. He explains that:

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Minority language rights are in particular need of justification, or so I will argue, because the case for state monolingualism is widely accepted and fairly compelling. Although it is not too difficult to think of personal complaints that minority speakers might level against state monolingualism, the challenge is to think of complaints that are sufficiently weighty to generate a duty on the part of the state to set aside the various concerns and priorities that support a monolingual policy and to make the appropriate accommodations instead.(p. 103).

Tollefson (2002) argues in favor of minority language groups claiming that “the downgrading of local languages in education is not an unfortunate, accidental outcome of the allocation of scarce resources but a deliberate attempt by dominant interests within a society to marginalise some students while granting privileges to others” (cited in Bruthiaux, 2009, p. 77). In the context of adult education, the notion of language rights has been an element of discussion and debate. English-Only policies in adult ESL programs, for example, obstruct the maintenance of minority students’ language and culture. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), dominant language representatives point out the concept of “tolerance” of a minority language in education if, and only if, the direct intention is to gain majority language mastery. In contrast, Pupavac (2006) claims, “as a languages graduate I am sympathetic with programmes that seek to enrich individuals’ lives and broaden their horizons through language learning. I would endorse the role bilingual education can play in helping marginalised communities access education. I am also conscious of the attachment people may feel towards their mother tongue” (p. 62).

While members of society view adult ESL learning productively or unfavorably; as a right or as a privilege; as a national benefit or as a waste of the country’s resources, educational institutions and organizations struggle with meeting the continued demands of adult ESL education in the United States. The next section discusses adult ESL programs and their role in meeting these demands.

### **Adult English Language Programs**

In an attempt to meet the diverse needs of many adults in this country, many ESL programs have been designed and implemented. Some of these needs may include linguistic,

educational, and cultural components (Buttaro & King, 2001). Ignash (1995) describes these programs as follows:

ESL programs are found for credit under departments of foreign language, speech, English, and communications, and for noncredit under adult education, community services, and continuing education programs offered in both community colleges and local K- 12 school districts. Choice exists in designing ESL programs. (p. 18).

Adult ESL programs in the U.S. vary in their characteristics and their objectives. Judd (2000), for example, describes some characteristics of ESL programs as follows:

A variety of programs exist—some publicly funded, others private; some for-profit, some not-for-profit; some with specific content (vocational, literacy, academic, etc.), some unspecified; some directed toward one specific language group, others serving a multilingual ESL population. There are no standard curricula or materials, nor is there any standard teaching methodology. In some programs, the curricula are outdated (even to the extent of following the now discredited grammar-translation or audiolingual methods), while others implement specific designs that have been created to meet students' needs. In some programs, the texts used (if they are used at all) are outdated and discredited; in others, current materials are used or are specifically developed.

Mathews-Aydinli (2008) identifies adult ESL programs as “privately-sponsored programs, volunteer literacy services, community-based programs, or workplace ESL classes” (p. 198). Regardless of their financial sustainability, these “adult ESL programs serve a diverse array of immigrant students, including young adults, parents, and senior citizens” (Lukes, 2009, p. 165).

Contrary to the belief that adult learners coming from different countries don’t want to learn English, Tucker (2007) explains that adult ESL programs generally have waiting lists. According to Lukes (2009), the Center for an Urban Future reports that “publicly funded ESL programs have space for only about 5% of eligible immigrant adults” (p. 165). Tucker states:

Non-English speaking adults in the United States want to learn English and become literate. The demand for adult ESL services and literacy programs continues to grow each year, and there are long waiting lists for ESL classes in many parts of the country. (p. 33).

Federally funded adult ESL programs enrolled an average of 1.2 million learners in 2003-2004 according to information taken from the National Center for Education Statistics (Tucker, 2007). Federal funding is a strong source of sustainability for many of these programs. Tucker claims that “most federal funding comes from appropriations under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), enacted as Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998” (p. 34). While many adult ESL programs are federally funded, there are many others that depend on volunteers for their sustainability. These may be faith-based or volunteer-based

organizations. Tucker further claims that inadequate funding places financial hardships on many adult learners and this results in long waiting time for them.

According to Buttaro and King (2001), some adult ESL programs emphasize the importance of not only linguistic instruction, but also the need for adults to integrate into the American society (e.g., survival English). This is done through a focus in the way the delivery is provided. Whether adult ESL programs concentrate on the notion of “English-Only” or “the use of students L1,” many of them pay special attention to the issues of who controls the learning. Buttaro and King explain it as follows:

ESL programs that emphasize this orientation tend to address issues of power and control on both the classroom and program levels. In an effort to equalize the power differential that exists between teachers and students, liberationist programs attempt to set up educational opportunities that put adults in charge of their own learning. (p. 43-44).

Schwarzer (2009) talks about a communicative approach for ESL learners. He claims that “what has come to be known as ‘communicative language teaching’ (CLT) has eclipsed the four-skills approach” (p. 26). Instruction in adult ESL programs is sometimes guided by the resources that are available to it. Nolan (2001), for example, argues that community adult ESL programs seldom provide a consistent and transparent approach based on theories of language learning. He claims that most of the instruction is guided by the vendors of ESL teaching/learning materials. According to him, ESL programs change the moment teaching

materials change, as most authors and publishing companies are regarded as research and theory-based.

While researchers continue to study and explain SLA theories, much can be learned when these theories are connected to the needs that every adult ELL has. The needs of adult ELLs will be greatly affected by the way adult ESL programs are structured and whether they enforce an English-Only policy or not in their classrooms. The educational levels of adult ELLs enrolled in ESL programs will most certainly determine the way language learning is achieved. A similar determining factor is the way society views—and understands—the option of allowing students' L1 when learning English as a second language.

Understanding the topic of L1 and knowing how scholars have interpreted its role in the ESL field gives a broader and clearer vision of its functionality. In the following section I will present literature that describes how the topic of L1 use in the adult ESL setting has been studied (although some of the studies examined the use of English as L1).

### **Literature on L1 Use in the Adult ESL Classroom**

While an abundant number of articles and book chapters that discuss the use of adult students' L1 in the ESL classrooms can be found, few research studies have been conducted on this topic in the last ten years. To narrow this topic even further, no studies that deal exclusively with educational levels on students' L1 and the relationship with learning strategies used in the adult ESL classroom were found in the literature. Once again, from the different adult learner categories described previously, the focus of this dissertation study will be on adequate formal learners—those with a high school or college level education in their L1—and their learning strategies. The few articles on adult ESL research studies that were found concentrated on three

particular areas: (1) How L1 is used (its role or function), (2) Why L1 is used (its purpose or reason), and (3) Perceptions of the use of L1. In the next section I begin the description of each area and the methods used to conduct the studies.

### **The Role of L1**

The topic of L1 has been approached from different angles. One such approach is the role it plays in the adult classroom (although the emphasis of this dissertation study is on adult students learning English as a second language, some research studies collected for this chapter consisted of adult language students learning, French, Spanish, Chinese, and German as second languages). The role of students' L1 has been examined both from the educator perspective and the learner perspective (See Table 3, p. 106).

From an educator perspective, for example, Edstrom (2006) intended to learn what the function of her L1 (English) was in the Spanish classroom. An important question in her study was *how* she used the L1 as an instructor. The author's findings indicate that her own L1 use as a teacher served as a tool for appropriately transmitting her lessons when clarifying and explaining instructional concepts. From the articles selected, this was the only one emphasizing an educator's interest in discovering the role L1 played on the delivery of her Spanish language course material.

From a learner perspective, on the other hand, researchers have investigated the functions that students attribute to the use of L1. How is L1 used? Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) found that L1 "imparts knowledge about the TL medium" (p. 249). In their view and based on their findings, the function of L1 was to provide a clearer understanding of the TL. Thus, the students' L1 served as a platform for using prior knowledge and also as a bridge between the L1

and TL learning. From their study, L1 was found to have a positive role for clarification and meaning. They also found, however, the L1 to have a negative role in the “lack of exposure to TL and overuse of L1, and a dependence on the L1” (p. 260). Storch and Wigglesworth (2005) similarly analyzed functions of L1, such as task management, task clarification, meaning and vocabulary, and grammar. In their study, they demonstrated that L1 was primarily used for task management (distribution of duties during projects among groups of students) and task clarification (discussion of instructions). L1 in their study was, therefore, used as a communication instrument.

### **Reasons for using L1**

Another aspect of students’ L1 that has been examined is its purpose. Why would students’ L1 be used or even considered in the adult ESL classroom for writing? As an element of the writing process, brainstorming (an invention strategy) has been known to incorporate students’ L1. Pappamihiel, Nishimata, & Mihai (2008), for instance, attempted to learn in their study if students’ L1 could serve the purpose of *invention* in writing tasks. Primarily, they sought to understand if students’ L1 was favorable or unfavorable in the process of invention for essay writing. The authors stated that, in the process of invention, students could be classified as either “poor” writers or could develop enhanced writing through the use of their L1.

An additional aspect of purpose is how L1 affects L2 acquisition during *transfer* of L1 to L2. In her study Baeda (2009) looked at transferability of L1, in this case Romanian, to L2 in particular forms of the L2, in this case the English language. To be exact, the researcher focused on negation rules in English for Romanian students in a school of medicine in Craiova, Romania.



In this study, the researcher was interested in knowing if student's L1 transferred or interfered in the L2 learning process when developing English negation statements during a six-month period.

Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009) conducted a study aiming to identify the purpose of L1 in adult ESL classes. Their findings showed that there were three main reasons for students' use of L1: (1) for translating words or phrases, (2) for comparing grammar across languages, and (3) for promoting a positive affective environment for learning. In her study, Edstrom (2006) similarly defined three reasons for her L1 use in the classroom in her self-study of L1 use as an instructor. She described these reasons as: (1) to clarify (questions, difficult concepts, grammar), (2) to explain directions, and (3) to compensate for lack of comprehension. Thoms, Liao, and Szustak (2005) studied Spanish, German, and Chinese speaker students and their reasons for using L1 using technology during chat sessions. They also found three primary reasons for students' use of their L1: (1) to move the task along, (2) to focus attention, and (3) to communicate interpersonally.

Finally, Schweers (1999) studied the reasons why students and teachers in a Puerto Rican university felt L1 should be used. He found numerous reasons for students' desire to use L1 during ESL instruction. These included the need "to explain difficult concepts...to have students feel more comfortable and confident, to check comprehension, and to define new vocabulary items" (p. 7). Another reason identified by students included helping them when they felt lost. Some students explained that L1 use "facilitates their learning of English between 'a little' and 'a lot'" (p. 7). According to the author, "a majority also agree that the use of Spanish helps them to learn English" (p. 7).

Overall, it was found that students used the L1 for reasons that ranged from developing ideas during brainstorming sessions to less academic-related activities, such as student

interaction to move along a particular task. While the most common reason was described to be clarification, it was shown that L1 served as an instrument for translation, comprehension, grammar comparison, and for setting a comfortable learning environment.

### **Perceptions of the Use of L1**

The third aspect of L1 that has been studied is the perception of the use of adult students' L1 in the second language classroom. One of the studies that addressed L1 perception was the one by Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney (2008). In this study the authors identified several views from a learner perspective. They described four categories under which students' views emerged: (1) L1 for medium-oriented goals, (2) L1 for framework-oriented goals, (3) perceived dangers of L1 use, and (4) views on the affective role of L1. First, under the medium-oriented goals, the authors found that students perceive their L1 to be beneficial for understanding vocabulary and grammar. They mention memorization and access to meaning as key elements when using L1. Second, under framework-oriented goals, there was no consensus on L1 use for framework interactions. The authors found a preference for the TL for classroom instructions, while students' L1 and the TL were voted evenly for assessment purposes. Third, the dangers identified in the results indicated "lack of exposure to TL, an overuse of L1, and a dependence on the L1" (p. 260). Under this category, students' views indicated that the use of L1 hinders TL attainment. Finally, the last category described the affective role of L1 as a positive factor. The authors found that students viewed L1 as reducing any negative affects while fostering positive attitudes and also allowing more comfortable classroom communication. Overall, students' views reflected a favorable role for the L1, although in some instances the TL was also considered equally favorable in particular tasks such as classroom management.

Another study that addressed the issue of perception of L1 is the one by Edstrom (2006). Aside from the reasons given for using L1, Edstrom discusses her own perceptions of why her L1 must be used in the classroom. First, she described a moral obligation to her students by stating that her ability to display respect and forming a positive learning environment through the use of L1 outweighed her belief in maximizing the TL. Second, she felt that it was important to avoid sacrificing valuable objectives for the sake of exclusive L2 use. Finally, she defined a negative perception about her use of L1 which was laziness. By laziness, she acknowledged that, at some point, both teachers and students felt too exhausted to be “disciplined.” Edstrom made an important comment regarding her view of L1 claiming that “if students make comments that reveal stereotypical understandings or inaccurate comprehension, teachers have two options: ignore remarks that cannot be addressed in the L2 or respond in the L1” (p. 285).

A third study that examined perceptions of L1 was the study by Storch and Wigglesworth (2003). In this study, the authors found different students’ views of using L1. Just like the study by Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008), Storch and Wigglesworth found that students saw L1 useful for difficult vocabulary and grammar explanations. For purposes of negotiating and deciding on grammatical structures and choices, the students reported using the L1 to accomplish this. The L1 was also found to be useful for creating an internal message for later producing its output verbally. In contrast, the authors also found students’ perception of L1 to be detrimental. Some students viewed their L1 as a barrier to slow down task completion because of the need to translate. Similar to one of the findings from Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney’s study that described the dangers of using L1, which included lack of exposure to the TL, other students in Storch and Wigglesworth felt the need to maximize the use of the TL to improve their speaking skills. Still others opted for speaking in the TL automatically in the ESL classroom. In spite of some

students' reluctance to use L1, the authors claimed that "8 of the 12 students noted that the L1 would have helped them complete the tasks more efficiently" (p. 767).

Finally, Schweers (1999) study also reflected perceptions of L1 use in the ESL classroom. Like Edstrom (2006), Schweers examined opinions of using L1 from teachers' point of view. In his study, however, Schweers studied four teachers and sought their perception of using L1 in their classrooms, as opposed to Edstrom's self-study. Aside from learning the reasons for L1 use in students, the author identified perceptions of teachers when confronted with the choice to allow L1 use or focus on English-Only instruction. Schweers collected opinions from four ESL teachers. The first teacher emphasized the importance of ensuring student learning over an English-Only policy. The second teacher discussed the role L1 plays in the development of writing material, assuming that L1 use allows for higher quality written work. The third teacher talked about building a good relationship between teacher and students by establishing rapport. This teacher also talked about being a role model by having the ability to use both languages. The last teacher described the need to demonstrate respect and value towards students' native language. As in most of the other studies indicating favorable outcomes in the use of L1, Schweers findings demonstrated usefulness of L1 as detailed in the points of view of some ESL teachers. Table 3 below shows a summary of these studies.

**Table 3:**

***Summary of L1 Research Studies Describing Role, Reason, & Perception***

Article	Role of L1 (How)	Reason for Using L1 (Why)	Perception of L1 (Opinion)
Badea (2009)		Determine if it Transfers or	

Huerta-Macias & Kephart (2009)	Interferes	
	Translation, comparison, & create positive learning setting	
Pappamihel, Nishimata, & Mihai (2008)	Determine if it is favorable or unfavorable	
Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney (2008)	As a platform for prior knowledge & as a bridge between L1 & L2	L1 helps in vocabulary and grammar, both L1 & TL are viewed as beneficial for framework interactions, dangers of L1 include lack of TL-overuse of L1-dependence on the L1, L1 reduces negative affects-fosters positive feelings-allows better classroom interaction
Edstrom (2006)	As a tool for lesson delivery	To clarify (questions, difficult points, grammar), to explain directions, & to compensate lack of understanding
Thoms, Liao, & Szustak (2005)	Move task along, focus attention, & interpersonal interaction	
Storch & Wigglesworth (2003)	As an interaction instrument	L1 is beneficial for difficult vocabulary and grammar explanations, negotiating grammatical choices, developing text internally to verbalize later. L1 would slow down task completion, should be minimized to improve speaking skills in TL

### Summary

Throughout this literature review several ideologies were presented relevant to teaching and learning languages. Schools of thought that defined specific ways the human mind functions and receives information were instrumental in developing language teaching approaches that were used throughout the twentieth century. While some of these ideas were implemented through teaching practices and later abandoned because of their ineffectiveness (e.g., grammar-translation method), particular views are still considered and used in some parts of the world.

An important section in this literature identified perhaps the biggest controversy in adult ESL teaching; English-Only policies or Bilingual approaches that allow students to use their native language (L1). On one side, significant arguments were presented to support the idea that total immersion in adult ESL classes is the most effective method for students to learn quickly. On the other side, extensive research evidence is described and discussed not only to contend that the use of adult students' L1 is inevitably necessary, but also to refute and counter-argue that English-Only approaches are unsupported and grounded on mere assumptions.

This literature review focuses very strongly on the theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). While this dissertation study does not concentrate on SLA theories exclusively, it does draw on certain aspects of learning and cognition, given the correlation of educational levels of participants and the way they apply their learning. The SLA theories presented provide a wide array of views of how students learn a second language. Discussions of how learners benefit from comprehensible input, the supplemental benefits of producing oral output, the importance of interactions with native-English speakers, the notion of accepting a new culture and society, the importance of understanding how students need to be proactive in their own learning, and the concept of a central processing mechanism that allows students to

function in more than one language contribute to the understanding of how a particular group of students with particular characteristics in common can learn a second language.

Another important section in this literature review involves the main actors in this study, the participants; the students. The English language learners (ELLs) who are generally seen as students that can be labeled equally display characteristics that demand special attention. This part of the literature review presented categories, backgrounds, and the reasons for their arrival to this country. Of special interest are the differences in educational levels of these students considering particular situations that each ELL may have lived in their country of origin.

In the next sections of this literature review I discuss the perception the American society has towards ELLs and their education. Although many scholars and educational researchers oppose monolingual educational approaches in the adult ESL context, the literature on the social and political viewpoints describe a more Americanized and assimilative preference. Racism and prejudice are concepts brought up in this discussion as possible reasons for demanding assimilation in schools. This section discusses the argument that political agendas, particularly during the 80's and 90's, favored English-Only approaches and monolingualism in the classrooms because of reasons other than the good of the learners.

The sub-section on language rights further talks about how some languages have been oppressed to the point of near extinction. I also discuss the mentality of dominant languages and the sense of superiority of those languages that are taking over the world. In this section I discuss authors that favor language preservation and how language is seen as an identity and the importance of its continuity for future generations. The concept of self-esteem and the role of schools in maintaining minority languages are also discussed.

In the next section I continue with a discussion of adult ESL programs and the role they play in the education of both immigrant and local adult students. I describe different characteristics of these programs and how extensive is the demand for ESL instruction in the U.S., despite the belief that claims otherwise. In this section a brief discussion on teaching materials and their usefulness is also presented along with criticism on the dependency of such teaching materials.

Finally, I conclude this literature review with a description of how the topic of adult ESL students' L1 has been studied. Three perspectives of L1 use are discussed in this section: (1) the role of L1, (2) the reasons for using L1, and (3) the perceptions students and teachers have towards L1 in the second language classroom. These three areas are further discussed in chapter in more detail outlining the methodology of the research studies each author presented.

This dissertation study focused on adults learning ESL who had a relatively high educational level in their L1. In an area where being bilingual is the norm, I was interested in knowing how participants in this study perceived an instructional approach that requires the exclusive use of English in the classroom as opposed to the flexibility of using their L1 as a learning tool as they learn English as a second language.



### CHAPTER 3

#### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

Many non-English speaking adults in this country have a need to learn English for numerous reasons. These learners vary in their linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds (Buttaro and King, 2001). As they enter the adult ESL classroom, however, they generally face teaching approaches that use the target language as the sole medium of instruction without regard to any aspect of their native language (L1) (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Cummins, 2007; Edstrom, 2006; García, 2010; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Wigglesworth, 2005).

In contrast to the practice of using the TL as the sole medium of instruction, however, research evidence has shown that the use of adult students' L1 is beneficial for L2 acquisition (Auerbach 1993; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Murray, 2005; Wigglesworth, 2005;). While some scholars believe that exposure to adult students' L1 is beneficial, there continues to be strong opposition to its use (Auerbach, 1993 & 2000; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). An important argument is that the use of adult students' L1 in the ESL classroom is not only

beneficial, but it also enhances confidence and builds self-esteem (Murray, 2005). Self-esteem may not only increase adults' ability to learn, but also their motivation to learn. Wlodkowski (2008) claims that "instructors have long known that when learners are motivated during the learning process, things go more smoothly, communication flows, anxiety decreases, and creativity and learning are more apparent" (p. 6). In spite of students' motivation to learn, many are challenged by the notion of English-Only policies that are prevalent in the minds of most adult ESL educators.

Many adult ESL programs uphold the philosophy that English-Only instruction is in the adult learners' best interest. However, Judd (2000), Auerbach (2000), Cummins (2007), and Crawford (2003) have linked this perspective to political grounds. Judd contends that English-Only supporters falsely argue that immigrants are not learning English. He claims that "within three generations or fewer, the immigrants' language has been lost and replaced by English." (p. 164). Malone (2003) states that, "in fact, the argument that it's better to 'submerge' learners directly in the language of wider communication (LWC), even though they neither speak nor understand it, makes so little pedagogical sense that one must assume that educators making such an argument have other reasons to resisting minority language education (MLE)" (p. 6).

While there continues to be strong controversy between the use of L1 and English-Only instruction in the adult ESL classroom, increasing evidence suggests that the benefits of a bilingual approach to teach ESL to adults outweigh the disadvantages (Auerbach, 1993; Baker, 2007; Gunn 2003; Malone, 2003; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Wigglesworth, 2005). Despite research evidence, many adult ESL educators adopt the idea of English-Only in their classrooms in an attempt to have adult learners think in the target language and not rely in their L1 (Wigglesworth, 2005). Whether adult programs impose English-Only policies or allow the use

of students' L1, an important factor that needs to be accounted for is the students' L1 academic background.

The educational levels of adult ELLs who enter ESL classes may vary significantly. Some adult ELLs may have had ample opportunity to receive a formal education, while others may be immigrants or refugees having had no opportunity to go to school (Buttaro & King, 2001). Freeman and Freeman (2009) describe three categories of learners: (1) Newly arrived with adequate formal schooling, (2) Newly arrived with limited formal schooling, and (3) Long-term English language learners.

Newly arrived students with adequate formal schooling are generally well acquainted with school experiences and possess a high level of literacy in their first language. Newly arrived students with limited formal schooling, on the other hand, are those students who have had interruptions during their education due to factors such as war, poverty, or lack of schools. Long-term English language learners are students who have lived in the U.S. for seven years or more, but have not developed enough academic literacy in either their L1 or L2 to do well academically. Although their academic backgrounds may vary from being preliterate to holding doctorate degrees in their L1 (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008), a sense of unity is experienced by most adult ELLs (Wlodkowski, 2008).

### **Purpose of the Study**

While the purpose of learning English as a second language may be similar for most adult learners, the academic background in their first language may not always be the same. In this dissertation study, however, I will be focusing on adequate formal learners to examine if and how their level of education in their L1 impacts their academic English learning. Thus, the

purpose of this study is to discover how adult adequate formal learners use their first language as they learn and develop academic English. This research study will be guided by the following questions:

- 1) How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?
- 2) What are the different learning practices (e.g., asking questions, drawing on cognates, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners used during their L1 educational experience?
- 3) How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?

In order to address the research questions presented, this chapter will be divided into three main areas that define the methodology guiding this study. First, I will describe the methodology used in eight research articles that were selected where the topic of adult students' L1 use was studied. Secondly, I will discuss my standpoint as a researcher and my self-perception as an instrument of inquiry. Finally, I will discuss the methodology selected for this dissertation study along with my rationale for its selection. Under this section I will identify the setting, population and sampling, data collection process, and how these data will be analyzed. The results of this study will provide useful information to ESL program directors, coordinators, administrators, and instructors as they develop curricula that target specific learning needs of adult ESL students.

### **Methodology Used in Literature**

In an attempt to better understand how the topic of native language (L1) in the adult ESL classroom has been studied, eight research studies articles were collected, grouped, and categorized according to research design, research method, and the basis for each study (i.e., role of L1, reason for L1, and perception of L1). The alignment of the articles by research designs identified one qualitative study and seven mixed-methods studies (See Table 4, p. 124). The description of the research articles with their respective research designs are outlined next.

### **Qualitative Studies**

While the nature of qualitative studies serves to explore and establish meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants (Creswell, 2009), only one of the articles selected fell into this category. The authors of this study were Storch and Wigglesworth (2003). The research method they used consisted of audio recordings and interviews.

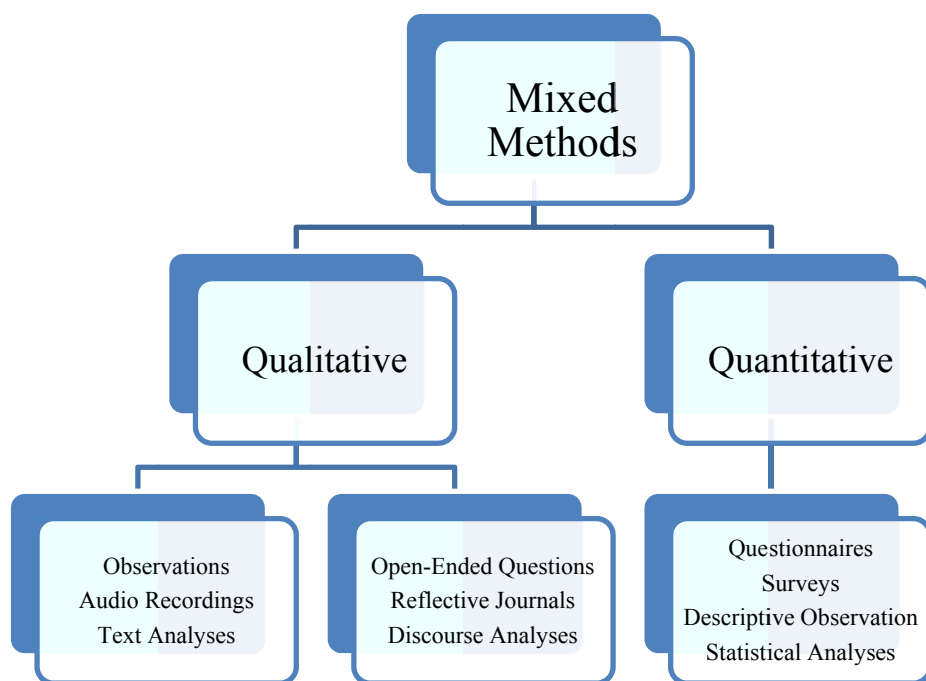
Audio recordings were used to explore if students' L1 was used and how frequently it was used during a text reconstruction task and a joint composition task. The text reconstruction task consisted of scrambled sets of words that needed to be arranged in a logical grammatically correct sentence. The joint composition task consisted of visualizing graphed information and producing a descriptive composition of what was interpreted. Both tasks allowed the authors to determine how students' L1 was used.

The authors then proceeded to interview participants to obtain their perception of L1 use. Interviewing the participants allowed the researchers to obtain additional in-depth information, in this case, about their view of using L1. The authors stressed that this research study included

interviewing participants, unlike other L1 studies that only concentrated on audio recorded material.

### **Mixed-Methods Studies**

The remaining seven studies fell under the mixed-methods category. The authors for these articles were Badea (2009), Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009), Pappamihel, Nishimata, and Mihai (2008), Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008), Edstrom (2006), and Schweers(1999). These researchers attempted to understand specific areas of L1 use in the adult second language classroom. Because of the complexity of the topic, they used mixed-methods designs in order to reach their research objectives. In designing and executing mixed-methods studies, “researchers must determine the strategy or purpose for the study to determine how best to organize data collection in the project” (Borman, Clarke, Cotner, & Lee, 2006, p. 128). The qualitative research methods of the mixed-methods studies from the remaining seven articles consisted of observations, audio recordings, text analyses, discourse analyses, open-ended questions, and reflective journals. The quantitative research methods consisted of questionnaires, surveys, descriptive observation, and statistical analyses. The mixed-methods design is illustrated in figure 2 below.



**Figure 2 Mixed-Methods Design Breakdown**

**Qualitative component.** A very common research method under qualitative designs is observation. Observations are used to collect data on the behavior of participants. Observations can be done in naturalistic contexts such as classrooms, playgrounds, or homes (Ho, O’Farrell, Hong, & You, 2006). Two of the seven mixed-methods studies, Badea (2009) and Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009), collected part of their information using observations in a medicine school in Romania and in adult ESL classrooms in border cities along the U.S.-Mexico border respectively. For a period of six months, Badea observed 50 young adults whose ages ranged between 19 and 21. Each observation lasted approximately two hours per week. The author’s main interest was to learn if students’ L1 transferred or interfered as they learned ESL. Although it was not specified in the article what the students’ L1 was, given the observation setting it is assumed that all students’ L1 is Romanian. Huerta-Macías and Kephart similarly engaged in classroom observations for part of their data collection. Unlike Baeda, however, Huerta-Macías

and Kephart observed an average of 110 students in 11 adult ESL classes. Their observations totaled 1,150 minutes. The majority of students' L1 in this study was Spanish. The objective of this study was to examine the reasons why adult ESL instructors used students' L1 in the classroom.

Audio recording is another research method under qualitative designs. Audio recording allows researchers to pick up detailed information within the context of the study or during an interview. Huerta-Macías and Kephart audio recorded interaction in the 11 adult ESL classrooms they observed in order to code language use and determine the amount of L1 used and by whom (i.e., teachers, students, teachers-students). In her self-study and aside from other research methods used, Edstrom (2006) audio-recorded herself for an entire semester using a lapel microphone every day during her Spanish 101 class. This class met twice a week for one hour and fifteen minutes. In order to determine the amount of L1 used in her own classroom, she transcribed her audio recordings and analyzed them along with her other data collection methods. Just like Huerta-Macías and Kephart (2009), Schweers (1999) also audio recorded university ESL classes to examine the frequency and the reasons teachers used students' L1 in their classroom. However, he audio recorded only 3 classes taking 35-minute audio samples from each one. While Huerta-Macías and Kephart's study involved ESL courses that included workplace ESL, noncredit ESL, credit-bearing ESL, intensive ESL/conversation, intensive ESL/grammar, and family literacy, Schweers concentrated on university EFL courses. No information was given as to the specific type of EFL or whether they were credit-bearing or non-credit courses.

Text analysis was another research method used by one of the authors. In an attempt to examine writing performance with and without using students' L1, Pappamihel et al. (2008)



collected sample essays. Two writing samples were assigned within the same week during the last week of a six-week intensive English program. In one of the samples students were asked to brainstorm (identified by the authors as an invention strategy) in their native language and in the other they were asked to brainstorm in English. The two essays were scored using an analytic rubric in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The combination of all scores provided a final overall score. Although text analysis was an important part of the research, the authors stressed that in the study they did not control for L1 education which may have had a significant impact on the results.

Another research method used in one of the studies was discourse analysis. Discourse analysis was used in the study by Thoms, Liao, and Szustak (2005) in trying to determine if and why students in Chinese, German, and Spanish courses used their L1 in an on-line chat activity. Discourse analysis is a common method used in anthropology and linguistics and it emphasizes “cultural patterning in communicative style, the use of speech routines of various sorts, and the variations in ways of speaking and listening that obtain within and between differing communities or networks of speaking practices” (Erickson, 2006, p. 182). In their study, Thoms et al. looked at chat logs to determine for what reasons the L1 was used during this activity. The objective of this part of the study was to compare previous research on face-to-face interactions and determine differences or similarities with on-line chat activities.

Open-ended questions were part of a larger data collection procedure in only one of the articles. In trying to identify students’ perceptions of L1 use, Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) used open-ended questions within their questionnaire. Open-ended questions constitute a qualitative research method that may be embedded in a quantitative method “in order to analyze different types of questions” (Creswell, 2009, p. 15). The questionnaires they used consisted of

23 questions where 21 were close-ended and 2 were open-ended. The objective of this *concurrent mixed-methods* procedure (p. 14) was to understand both the role of L1 and the opinion of its use from the participants.

Documented data in the form of journal writing was one of three research methods employed by Edstrom (2006). During her self-evaluation of L1 use within her Spanish class, Edstrom wanted to examine to what extent her L1 was used. She kept a journal of her own reactions to her use of L1 noting her purposes for using L1 and estimating the amount used after each class session. This data collection allowed Edstrom to defend and criticize her own use of L1 under certain circumstances. Along with the data from her recordings, her journal writing helped her to compare her views of using L1 with those of her students drawn from the questionnaires. Edstrom's study was the only article from the seven mixed-methods studies that used journal writing as part of the research method.

One of the characteristics of qualitative research data collection is to gain insight of participants' natural activities and behaviors (Ho et al., 2006). For the purpose of identifying the use of students and instructors' use of L1 in natural contexts, the authors above relied on observations, audio recordings, text analyses, discourse analyses, open-ended questions, and journal writing to achieve this objective. Although these methods were only part of the overall investigation, it gave the authors the realistic and personal aspect of their research data.

**Quantitative component.** One of the data collection methods under the quantitative part of the mixed-methods designs from the selected articles was questionnaires. While questionnaires can also be used for qualitative approaches, they are most commonly linked to quantitative design research methods. Although their reliability is sometimes questionable,

close-ended questionnaires are a good method of data collection for larger groups and their scoring is generally more simple (Ho et al., 2006). In trying to examine certain aspects of the topic of L1, four studies, Baeda (2009); Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008); Edstrom (2006); and Schweers (1999) reported questionnaires as part of their research methods.

Aside from her audio-recorded class sessions and her reflective journal, Edstrom used written questionnaires on the last day of class to get students' input on their teacher's use of L1 in their Spanish class. By tallying the students' responses, she identified this procedure as a quantitative data collection method. Response options to the question, "How much English does your teacher typically use?" included (a) a lot, (b) some, (e) very little, and (d) never. A similar questionnaire was used by Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008), where the responses were selected from a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Again, the aim of this study is to obtain students' input on the use of L1, this time in a beginner French course. The results of the quantitative piece (closed-ended questions) were used to support the qualitative part (open-ended questions) of this mixed-methods research design. While Edstrom's study included 15 participants, Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney's study involved almost four times as many with 52 participants.

Two more studies reported questionnaires as their data collection approach. These were studies by Baeda (2009) and Schweers (1999). Although both studies clearly identify questionnaires as their research methods, neither author explicitly describes the nature of the questions (i.e., open-ended or close ended). In Baeda's study, however, the author makes reference to percentages to identify a decrease in students' incorrect utterances in the TL between the first and the fifth month of the study. The objective of this study was to examine if there was transfer or interference of students' L1 when learning English. The percentages

mentioned in the study are the only possible indication that numeric data was collected to calculate such percentages. The assumption is that questions were close-ended in nature.

Like Rolin-Ianziti and Varshney (2008) and Edstrom (2006), Schweers used questionnaires as part of his research method to investigate students' perceptions about using L1 (Spanish) in the ESL classroom. However, unlike Baeda, he did provide a table with numeric results and percentages drawn from his questionnaire.

Another research method under the quantitative designs is surveys. Surveys "describe relevant characteristics of individuals, groups, or organizations" (Berends, 2006, p. 623). A survey design provides "quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). The study by Huerta-Macías and Kephart (2009) was the only study that utilized surveys. They posted an on-line survey at the state level and national level for three purposes: (1) to examine the reasons for using L1 in adult ESL classrooms, (2) to broaden the range of their study, and (3) to learn about policies of language use in other settings across the state and the nation. The on-line survey was created with Survey Monkey software and reflected a structured multiple choice questionnaire. Out of eighty-four adult ESL instructors who took the survey, sixty-four answered all of the questions.

Descriptive observation was another research approach used under the quantitative design. Thoms et al. (2005) were the authors of this study and they used descriptive observation, which serves to simply describe numeric data and provide a sketch of a data set (Shaffer, 2006). In this research study, subjects were asked to participate in three chat sessions that involved a collaborative jigsaw activity. Part of the objective of the study was to determine how many times students used L1 as they interacted with each other in the TL. Although the instructions

asked for communication in the TL (Chinese, German, and Spanish) during the activity, the authors were able to determine the frequency of participants' use of their L1. Using descriptive analysis allowed the authors to calculate the percentage of L1 used by students during their chat sessions.

The final research method used under the quantitative component is statistical analysis. The only study using statistical analysis to investigate the effectiveness of L1 and TL during brainstorming activities was Pappamihel et al. (2008). After scoring the two essay samples the authors analyzed score information using a statistical software package. Their objective was to examine differences when students brainstormed using their L1 and their TL. They were forced to perform repeated measures analyses to find overall differences. The authors claimed that they did not control from L1 educational levels.

The qualitative and quantitative designs just described make up the mixed-methods designs utilized in the majority of the research articles that examined the use of adult students' L1 in second language classrooms. As discussed, only one entirely qualitative research study was found under this topic. While all these research studies give a broad spectrum of alternatives for research methods, the guiding principle for choosing an appropriate research design is based on the problem to be investigated. The topic of adult ESL students' use of L1 lends itself to be examined from different angles as was reflected in the aforementioned studies.

**Table 4:*****Summary of L1 Research Studies by Design and Method***

Article	Research Design	Research Method
Badea (2009)	Mixed-Methods	Interview Observations Audio/Video Recordings
Huerta-Macias & Kephart (2009)	Mixed-Methods	Observations Audio Recordings On-Line Surveys
Pappamihiel, Nishimata, & Mihai (2008)	Mixed-Methods	Text Analysis
Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney (2008)	Mixed-Methods	Questionnaires
Edstrom (2006)	Mixed-Methods	Audio-Recordings A Reflective Journal Questionnaires
Thoms, Liao, & Szustak (2005)	Mixed-Methods	Chat Sessions Descriptive Observations Discourse Analysis
Storch & Wigglesworth (2003)	Qualitative	Interviews Audio-Recordings
Schweers (1999)	Mixed-Methods	Audio/Video Recordings Questionnaires

**Researcher as Instrument**

Approximately thirty years ago, I entered elementary school in the U.S. with a sense of fear and intimidation because of my lack of English language skills. I not only needed to continue learning grade-level material, but also learn English as a second language for communication and academic purposes. Although I was immediately confronted with many linguistic obstacles throughout the early years of my schooling, I was eager to speak and sound like a native English speaker. Growing up and continuing my education in regular English classes up to my high school graduation did not keep me from paying close attention to how my L1 had influenced my English language learning. This interest led me to focus on L1 as a main

topic for my dissertation study. As a researcher, I wanted to learn and understand how other students—although adults—felt about their L1 as they learned English. To learn about this, I felt I needed to explore beyond regular student behavior inside the classrooms. For this reason, I decided to engage participants in semi-structured interviews (Appendix C2 & D2) and journal writing (Appendix E2) to gain a deeper understanding of their thoughts. This portion of my investigation, I believe, constituted an important component of my research data.

### **Interview Questions**

As an adult ESL program administrator and former ESL student, I have found great passion for working with and learning how ESL students, particularly adults, experience their second language learning. I personally relied on my L1 throughout my ESL journey, and today it continues to be a strong source of language assistance. Since my dissertation study concentrated on the use of students' L1 in an adult ESL classroom, I needed to learn about participants' English language learning origins or, at least, about possible exposure to it. For this, I used interview questions that requested birthplace information and the length of time participants attended schools in the United States.

Being born in this country does not guarantee an advantage in language learning, since many students who are U.S. citizens have lived all their lives and attended school in Mexico without speaking a word of English. However, as U.S. citizens having lived their entire lives in a foreign country, some ESL students feel a sense of urgency to learn English and soon become part of the American society for professional purposes, better academic performance, business needs, or personal reasons. This urgency to learn English could potentially have had an impact on how participants viewed themselves as ESL students. Coupled with the need to learn the

English language, students who may have attended school in this country for a longer time, aside from their regular education in Mexico, may have had some advantages over others who did not.

The interview questions that I used for this part of my inquiry were:

- Where were you born?
- How long have you attended school in the U.S.?

My experience in a Mexican school was never forgotten. The most significant recollection of my three years in elementary was the types of exams that were administered. I clearly remember seeing exams the size of newspapers (and apparently they were made with the same type of paper). However, it was not the size or the type of material, but the content of the exams that usually made me nervous. Nonetheless, having had the experience of confronting exams that were both physically and academically challenging, I have always felt that this experience made me somewhat stronger and forced me to expect tough exams. As I thought of this particular detail of my education, I wondered if my participants had, perhaps, experienced anything like I did in their schools in Mexico. I wanted to inquire about this episode in their academic life and see if that somehow affected their ESL learning. I used the following question/request to obtain this information: “Tell me about your school experience(s).”

As a Spanish speaker learning English as a second language, having my L1 as my source of communication was fundamental. Other than a question about dictionary use, the remaining first-round questions dealt with students’ L1. By posing questions about students’ L1, I intended to know how students felt about the role of L1, the reasons for their L1 use, and their opinion about L1. These questions included:

- Do you feel that using your L1 is beneficial when you are learning English? How?
- How do you use your native language to learn English?



- Do you think your education in your first language helps you learn English in this program? Give examples.
- Do you prefer English-Only instruction or bilingual instruction?

Given the open-ended nature of these questions, participants were able to elaborate freely on all their answers.

### **Reflective Journals**

As a researcher, I also intended to obtain a more personalized and private interpretation from each participant about how their L1 was being used. I figured that what participants may not have felt comfortable saying during an interview could be potentially easier for them to write it instead. For those who thought they may not have been using their L1, I wanted for them to realize it and to know what it meant for them if, in fact, they used it, perhaps without noticing it. In order to accomplish this, I requested each participant to answer the following question in a reflective journal (See Appendix E2) that would need to be completed on a weekly basis: “In what way did you use your L1 to help you in today’s lesson?” Since I wanted to have as much consistency in students’ responses as possible, I provided sub-questions that were to be used as a guide to help participants write their responses. The following were the sub-questions provided:

- What questions did you ask your instructor today?
- Was any part of the lesson content already familiar to you? Explain why.
- When you write, do you think in English or Spanish? Explain why.
- What made it easier for you to understand the lesson today? Explain why.
- How did the instructor assist you today? Explain why.
- What did you rely on from your L1 in today’s lesson? Explain.

The idea was to review these sub-questions as they wrote each entry, not to answer each one separately. To ensure comprehension, I asked each participant to write in their L1. Since I did not want to interfere with their writing, I did not pick up their journals until the end of the spring semester. I intended to allow as much free writing as possible.

As I designed interview questions and journal topics, I was usually influenced by my past experience. As a researcher, I expected students to think like I did or reveal similar feelings. In the next section, I explain how my strong belief for the use of L1 emerged and why I anticipated similar outcomes from my participants.

### **Researcher Bias**

Since the beginning of my ESL studies, one of my biggest goals was to learn English to be able to integrate and feel part of the rest of the regular elementary fourth grade class. Although my dream was to be fluent and feel accepted as any other English-speaking student, I also maintained a sense of pride and respect for who I was and where I was from, particularly in my language. This deep feeling of pride was nurtured by my parents who continuously instilled in me the importance of continuing to speak Spanish the way I did in Monterrey, Mexico, as opposed to the Spanish that people spoke in our community. Even as I continued to acquire and learn English for communication and academic purposes, I always tried to maintain both languages separated when speaking, even when I relied on my L1 to reinforce my L2 learning. In other words, during my ESL learning process, I simply separated my L1 during oral production, not ignored it.

As a result of this way of thinking, I feel that I achieved a good level of English language literacy and proficiency, while maintaining a relatively high level of academic and

communicative Spanish language skills. My communicative Spanish language skills were constantly reinforced at home with the help of my parents. My academic Spanish development actually took place mostly in a university in the U.S. and this helped me not only maintain, but also improve my reading and writing skills in my L1. In my case, my L1 was a fundamental source of second language development during my ESL learning experience. This *balanced bilingualism* (Baker, 2007) allowed me to better learn and understand differences and similarities in my L1 and L2. For this reason, I feel that students who have a high level of L1 need not only be aware of it, but also learn how to utilize it during their ESL acquisition and learning process. Because all my participants were adequate formal learners of English, they all have the tools needed to succeed in their second language learning endeavors as I did.

Since I feel very strongly about L1 use, I generally expected participants' behavior to display similar attitudes. During my observations it was no surprise to acknowledge just how much students engaged and used their L1, perhaps without even noticing it. In my opinion, awareness of the usefulness of their L1 can be key to a more successful second language learning experience. However, given that many of the students, if not all, already come with the expectation that there needs to be exclusive use of English in the classroom to consider it a successful class, it may be difficult to convince them that their L1 can play a significant role in their ESL learning.

The points described helped me decide on the particular research design and methods for my dissertation study. In the next section, I describe the chosen methodology and the rationale for choosing this method.

### **Methodology for Dissertation Study**

After examining how the topic of adult ESL students' use of L1 has been studied and after discussing my position as a researcher, I decided to use a qualitative design for the purpose of this dissertation study. The nature of qualitative studies allows a researcher to learn by direct contact with participants. As a researcher, my interest was learning how L1 educated adult ESL students use their L1 and also how they apply learning strategies they may already possess as they learn ESL. Given the naturalistic nature of this research design, I decided to collect information at the direct setting where learning takes place and students engage in their natural learning behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Ho et al., 2006; Yin, 2006). While this dissertation study seeks to understand how L1 educated adult ESL students engage in their learning of ESL, my objective as a researcher was to engage in classroom observations and interviews to collect my data. My explanatory question concept in this dissertation study was not only to know how and under what conditions educated adult ESL students use their L1 to learn academic English, but also to understand how they viewed their L1 as a source for learning academic English. Drawing on the research studies examined previously, a theoretical perspective about the use of students' L1 in second language classrooms indicated overall advantages that potentially outweighed disadvantages.

All but one of the eight research studies examined relied on several research methods for their data collection. In conducting a qualitative study for this dissertation, I decided to use four research methods: direct classroom observations, participant interviews using semi-structured questions and open-ended conversations, reflective journals written by participants, and a survey used exclusively for selecting participants. Interestingly, the selection of participants was based

upon educational level only with no regard to age or gender. Hence, the variation of the participants in age and gender reflected different opinions about their use of L1.

The first research method used was classroom observations. Classroom observations were used throughout a three month period in the course of the spring 2011 semester. In regards to observations, Evertson and Green (1986) claim that “the purpose of the observation guides what will be done, how it will be used, and what can be obtained” (p. 247). The goal of gathering information through classroom observation was to examine specific behavior each student had during different class sessions throughout the semester. Aside from learning specific behavior of students, part of the goal of observations was also to examine language use under particular circumstances (e.g., group activities, independent work, question/answer sessions, etc.). Overall, I observed a total of 1,895 minutes.

Aside from classroom observations, I also engaged in participant interviews. Participant interviews using open-ended questions provided insightful data not only as a follow-up on data collected during observations (particularly learning behavior patterns), but also on gaining an understanding of students’ views of their own learning strategies. I wanted to engage in what Brenner (2006) defines as semi-structured protocol that allows interviewers to ask “the same core questions with the freedom to ask follow-up questions that build on the responses received” (p. 362). The significance of having this build-up freedom as interviews progressed was that it allowed me to further question some of the responses given on a specific area. Again, having students from different ages and different gender made some differences in their responses. In order to accurately obtain interview data, I audio-recorded each interview. These audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed for differences and similarities among all participants by way of coding (Hubbard and Power, 1999) their responses into categories.

My third research method consisted of reflective journals written by each participant at my request. I intended to have students do a reflection of what each class session entailed in order to supplement interview and observation data. To accomplish this, I gave each participant a spiral notebook so that they could write a reflection as often as they could, preferably after each class session, on their experience in using their L1. To assist them in formulating their response, I provided the following question: “In what ways did you use your native language to help you in today’s lesson?” (See Appendix E2). In trying to answer this question, they would reflect on how they accessed or relied on their L1, preferably after each class. According to Creswell (2009), these more private documents explaining each student’s perceptions (in this case of the role of their L1) yield more personalized thoughts that may, otherwise, be missed or purposely omitted in other mediums. As Creswell suggests, the idea is to “include data collection types that go beyond typical observations and interviews” (p. 181).

With this combination of research methods I was able to obtain extremely valuable information for my analysis. From what has been collected thus far, there is likelihood of triangulation or establishing parallel lines of evidence that make findings in this dissertation study as rich as possible (Yin, 2006). In the next section I will describe the setting, sampling plan, data collection process, and data analysis.

## **Setting**

This study was conducted at an English language institute located in a university along the Texas-Mexico border. This language institute is a component of the continuing education division of a state university. The mission of this program is two-fold. First, it serves international students seeking language training for professional, academic, or personal purposes.

Second, it serves local, academically-challenged English language learners who are either high school graduates seeking college admission, or drop-out students who have obtained a GED and are also seeking college admission. The open-admission policy of this university allows for easier access to most students.

The English language program's enrollment varies from semester to semester. The fall and spring semesters are generally higher-enrollment semesters, whereas summer sessions experience slightly lower student registrations. Given the border location of the campus that houses this program, enrollment generally consists of Mexican citizens of whom 50% are commuter students. Mexican citizens from non-border Mexican states make up approximately 5% of the program's enrollment. Other international students make up an additional 5% of the program's enrollment. U.S. citizens or legal residents make up approximately 40% of the program's enrollment. During the last calendar year, this program witnessed a slight increment of enrollment from the domestic student category.

This program hires part-time instructors who are both native English speakers and bilingual (English and Spanish speakers). While the program does not have an explicit policy that dictates exclusive English-Only use inside the classrooms, it is a common practice that students speak English at all times. Students are expected to use English to communicate with instructors and with other students. Some instructors write the words "English Only" on the board for students to acknowledge that this is expected every class meeting, although this is sometimes difficult to enforce. Many students who enroll in this program, particularly those who come from other countries, already expect to use English as a medium of communication.

While the expectation is for students to use English as much as possible in this program, some instructors are flexible in their language policy and use their students' L1 for clarification

purposes. The use of students' L1 by instructors happens even with native English speaking instructors when they know how to communicate in their students' L1. Given that the majority of the students in this program speak Spanish as their L1, it is common to have entire classes made up of native Spanish speakers.

Courses offered in this program consist of grammar, writing, conversation, and English skills. Grammar courses concentrate on language structure and syntax. Writing courses focus on sentence, paragraph, and essay development taught sequentially as the students advance through the levels. Conversation courses aim at developing the students' ability to communicate one-on-one and/or present information orally to an audience. English skills courses have communicative objectives for students by covering reading, writing, listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills, while at the same time enriching students' vocabulary. For purposes of this study, the objective was to follow and observe participants in the writing courses only.

Four out of the five levels in the program include writing courses. These courses follow a sequence used by the textbook series *Great Sentences*, *Great Paragraphs*, *Great Essays*, and *Greater Essays* by the Heinle Cengage Learning Publishing Company. Each of the books presents a number of writing models in different styles where students learn to express their thoughts, present arguments, or provide detailed narratives. Although textbooks for all courses are revised for continuation or possible replacement, these textbooks have been in use by this program for over three years.

### **Sampling Plan**

A Learner Category Survey (see Appendix A1 & A2) was distributed to a group of 35 adult students in two beginning level writing courses during the fall 2010 semester. A total of



eight participants who were registered in these courses were selected based on their level of education in their first language as determined by the Learner Category Survey. However, one participant (student #3) had to withdraw from the study due to a personal emergency. All seven remaining participants were students in the adequate formal learner category. For the purposes of this study, students with secondary education or higher (e.g., high school or college) in their first language were considered adequate formal learners.

Participants were selected from two classes, an evening class that met twice a week and a morning class that met three times a week. Both classes were writing classes from the beginner level. Writing classes at the beginner level targeted sentence structure and, if time and student progress permit, paragraph development. Although these courses concentrated on writing skills, they usually covered grammatical concepts needed to supplement students' writing.

The selection process took place during the latter part of the fall 2010 semester. During this semester participants were registered in the beginning level writing courses. However, data collection began in the spring 2011 semester and by this time all participants had passed to the intermediate level. Unlike beginner level writing courses that focus primarily on sentence structure, intermediate level writing courses target paragraph development. While paragraph development was the main objective, some students in this level still needed reinforcement on basic sentence structure. For this reason, instructors sometimes had to be ready to address and/or deviate from lesson already planned. Activities for these classes varied depending on how each instructor perceived students' understanding of course content. Some of these activities involved group work where students discussed paragraph writing, engaged in peer editing, or brainstormed together.

The seven students who were chosen were asked to sign consent forms (Appendix B2) in order to take part in the study. I discussed with the participants their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty to their academic standing. As a researcher and administrator, I was not involved in the assignment of grades. Numbers were assigned to students in all reports and writing to maintain confidentiality.

The Learner Category Survey was a simple four-question instrument that asked for the following information: (1) length of residence in the U.S., (2) highest level of study in the participant's country of origin, (3) highest level of study in the U.S., and (4) last grade level of participant if he/she dropped from school – if applicable. While all the questions were equally valuable, the main focus for the selection of the participants was question number 2. This question allowed for the selection of students who had graduated from high school and/or obtained a college degree in their native country. After collecting the surveys from both classes, participants who had marked high school or university completion in their L1 were segregated from the rest so that only eight participants could be further selected. This survey instrument was used exclusively to collect the information needed.

## **Participants**

The students selected to participate in this study were categorized as adequate formal schooled learners. Their formal education ranged from high school graduates to having earned college degrees in different areas. From all seven participants, four were high school graduates and three had earned a college degree. Students who had college education earned their degrees in Mexican institutions. Table 5 below illustrates participants' information.

**Table 5:*****Breakdown of Participant Information***

Participant Information			
<b>Student</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>L1 Education</b>	<b>Area of Study</b>
Elizabeth	F	High School	Academic
Nadia	F	College	Civil Engineering
Cristina	F	High School	Academic
Zoila	F	High School	Academic
Daniela	F	High School	Academic
Manuel	M	College	Civil Engineering
Aurora	F	College	Nurse

As noted in Table 5, six out of the seven participants were females. The gender enrollment overall ratio of the English language institute where this study was undertaken is usually about 60% females and 40% males. Although enrollment varies, females have traditionally reflected higher enrollment than males. Higher female participant selection for this study could have been the result of these program statistics, since the selection was based on educational level exclusively.

While some participants brought a high school education level and others a university education level, all students possessed a solid academic background that warranted them the label of adequate formal schooled learners for the purposes of this dissertation study. The following section presents a brief participant profile to illustrate origin, academic background, and English language program enrollment status.

**Elizabeth.** Elizabeth was born in Mexico and her native language is Spanish. She has lived there all her life and attended public school since elementary. Her highest level of education is high school. Although she claimed that she was not very dedicated in her studies while in Mexico and also that she could do better in her current English classes, she appeared to be very attentive and participative in class. During her interviews she explained that despite her lack of dedication to her classes, she always got very good grades in Mexico and was similarly getting good grades in her English classes.

After graduating from high school in Mexico, Elizabeth began her English language studies in the United States in this English Language Institute in the fall 2010 semester. She enrolled in the beginning level taking four courses; grammar, writing, conversation, and English skills. By the time the interviews took place during the spring 2011 semester, she was already in her second semester taking the same four courses at the intermediate level. This was the first time she was ever attending a school in the United States.

**Nadia.** Nadia was born in a border city in South Texas. However, she lived and attended school in Mexico her entire life. She completed college coursework in Mexico meeting the requirements to obtain a degree in civil engineering (meeting the requirements was stated because the impression was that she did not officially obtain a degree). She stated that she completed her degree about four years ago. However, in the university that she attended, students were apparently required to pass an English exam with an 80 percent passing score in order to obtain their degrees. Although she completed all coursework, she explained that she did not get her degree because she did not take the English exam. She claimed that she could still receive it with her grade point average or with work experience, although no confirmation was

given as to whether she officially claimed her degree or not when she explained the university procedures.

She explained that she took English classes in Mexico during her middle school and high school years because it was a requirement. She claimed that once she entered the university, English classes were no longer a requirement for any career, despite the fact that they still offered them. She claimed that when she entered the university she did not truly consider English classes because she wanted to focus on the courses that she needed for her degree. Although getting her degree was her focus, it was hard to believe that she overlooked English classes when the university required an English exam to be able to receive any degree as she explained it.

Nadia decided to attend a school in the U.S. for the first time after completing her degree in Mexico. She enrolled in this English language institute in the fall 2010 semester in the beginning level taking grammar, writing, and conversation courses. At the time of the interviews during the spring 2011 semester, she was attending her second semester taking grammar, writing, and conversation courses at the intermediate level.

**Cristina.** Cristina was born in a border city in the United States. She seemed to be in her early twenties at the time of the interview and her native language is Spanish. Cristina claimed having gone to kindergarten in the U.S. and then to first grade in elementary, although only for a short time, since she did not complete the entire school year. She continued her school in Mexico and graduated from high school. She explained that Math was one of the most difficult subjects in school in Mexico. She specifically mentioned physics and chemistry. When asked about any English classes taken in Mexico, she explained that at the middle school and

high school levels students were required to take English classes. While taking English classes during her middle and high school years, she also took some English classes in a private school. She explained that her English classes in Mexico were very easy, since they only reviewed the alphabet, the numbers, and some parts of speech. She mentioned that the objective of these English classes was mainly to provide instruction for grammar, writing, and translation in a more teacher-centered approach, since there was no speaking practice. Instruction was usually given in Spanish.

At the time of the interview sessions, it was the first time that Cristina was taking classes in the U.S. aside from her elementary years. The spring 2011 semester was her second semester in this English language institute taking intermediate level grammar, writing, and conversation courses. She had already taken the same courses at the beginning level during the previous semester.

**Zoila.** Zoila was born in Mexico and she lived there all her life. She is in her mid-twenties and her first language is Spanish. She attended school in Mexico all her life graduating from high school with a specialization in electronics. During her regular course of middle school and high school, she was required to take English classes. She explained that she usually spent 3 hours per week in her English classes, both in middle school and high school.

According to her, English classes in Mexico were more structured to grammar instruction and translation assignments. English teachers usually spoke Spanish with very few examples in English. After middle school and high school, Zoila mentioned having taken English classes in another private institution in Mexico. Her recollection of this school was that they were not too accurate in their instruction. Comparing what she has been learning in this English language

institute, she claims that much of the material that she was taught in the private school in Mexico was not correct.

Zoila had not attended any school in the U.S. until enrolling in this English language Institute. She enrolled in the fall 2010 semester in the beginning level grammar, writing, and conversation courses. At the time of these interviews, she had already advanced to the intermediate level grammar, writing, and conversation courses during the spring 2011 semester. While studying in this English language Institute, Zoila claimed that she learned extensively during the fall semester in the beginning level courses. She also explained that, although she knew she was moving forward, she felt that she had not been progressing in the current intermediate level as she did at the beginning level, at least not in the writing class.

**Daniela.** Daniela was born in the United States. She did not specify where in the U.S. she was born, but she did confirm being in a U.S. school for the first time in this English language institute. She also stated that she had gone to school in Mexico up to her high school graduation. Daniela talked about her L1 education and she mentioned that it was relatively easy all along. The only subject area that she claimed having some difficulty was Math. Daniela was not too clear on what particular Math she was referring to or during what grade level she had difficulty.

Daniela explained that she had also taken English classes in Mexico. She stated that English classes were a requirement during her middle school and high school years. She described these English classes as very basic, claiming that in all the six years (between her middle school and high school) of English she only saw the same material. She mentioned that

the objective of these English classes were conversation and writing, although they seldom engaged in conversation.

Daniela claimed to be a person who gets frustrated when she tries to speak English but has difficulty. When she wrote it, however, she explained that she felt more comfortable because there was always the opportunity to go back and review and correct any mistakes. She usually liked to take her time when writing English, making sure that everything was written correctly.

At the time of the interviews, Daniela was in her second semester taking grammar, writing, and conversation courses at the intermediate level. She entered this language institute the previous semester (Fall 2010) taking the same courses at the beginning level.

**Manuel.** Manuel was born in Mexico and he earned a college degree in the area of civil engineering. He went to school entirely in Mexico up to his graduation from high school. As an employee he was sent to two trainings prior to attending the English language institute. Both of the trainings that he attended were drafting trainings in two different locations. One of the trainings consisted more of descriptive geometry. He explained that the training on descriptive geometry was taught by an instructor who spoke very little or no Spanish. The second training was taught by an instructor who was bilingual. Since the second instructor was bilingual, Manuel explained that he usually asked questions in his L1, but the instructor answered both in L1 and in English.

In his university experience, Manuel talked about difficulties he had with a couple of engineering courses. He explained that he had to repeat these courses due to failing grades. He stated that these courses were very difficult for him. However, he also claimed that it was allowed to repeat a failed course, as long as it was done before the start of the next school cycle.



Along with his engineering courses, Manuel mentioned that there was one English course that was part of the engineering degree and, as such, it was a mandatory course. The course was titled, English for Engineers and it was required only one semester. It consisted of readings related to engineering for the purpose of comprehending only. According to Manuel, the instructor who taught this course was a Mexican instructor who knew some English. Manuel further claimed that he wasn't sure if this instructor had attended school in the U.S. or not.

Before taking this English for Engineers course at the university, Manuel explained that he also took English classes during his middle school and high school years. He stated that these courses were good and that the instructors had graduated from U.S. high schools, but had completed their Bachelor's degrees in education in Mexico. Manuel also mentioned a third instructor during his time taking English classes in Mexico; however, he did emphasize a difference in teaching. When asked about the focus of the English course that he took at the university he explained as follows:

Era únicamente lectura para comprensión; lectura para entender los términos de ingeniería. Específicamente leíamos un fragmento de una estructura de ingeniería para que entiéramos; nada de gramática. Estaba muy aislado. Antes de llevar inglés en la Universidad, llevé inglés en la secundaria y preparatoria. Ahí si llevamos gramática. Para ser México, si era un nivel de regular a bueno porque me toco dos maestros que habían terminado aquí la high school en estados unidos y en México hicieron su licenciatura de maestros de pedagogía. Con ellos llevé unas cinco materias y

un sesenta por ciento fue gramática. Y un tercer maestro que, hasta donde yo sé, no graduó de high school aquí, probablemente de secundaria. El estudio allá en México. Se notaba la diferencia entre los dos que sí habían terminado la high school y este que no había terminado la high school.

*It was only reading for comprehension; reading to understand the engineering terminology. Specifically we would read a fragment from an engineering structure in order to understand; no grammar. I was very isolated. Before taking English at the university, I took it in middle school and high school. There we did have grammar. For being Mexico, the level was from regular to good because I had two instructors who had done their high school here in the U.S. and in Mexico they got their Bachelor's degree in education. With them I had about five courses and a good sixty percent was grammar. A third instructor, as far as I know, did not graduate from high school here, probably from middle school. He studied in Mexico. You could tell the difference between the two who had finished high school here and this one who did not finish it.*

Manuel stated that this was already his second semester in this English language institute. During the fall 2010 semester, he took courses in the beginning level. At the time of the

interview he was already taking intermediate level courses. He explained that one of his objectives was to take a drafting class immediately after this spring semester ended.

**Aurora.** Aurora was born in Mexico and she earned a degree in nursing from the school of nursing in a local Mexican university. She attended elementary, middle school, and high school in Mexico and then enrolled at the university to pursue her degree in nursing. At this university she spent three years of study and one year of internship.

While in public school, Aurora explained that she did relatively well until she got to high school. When she entered high school she described having difficulties only with Mathematics. As for nursing, she mentioned that the nursing courses were easy, particularly since she had already been at the high school level.

Aurora explained that she did not have to take any English classes during her university studies. She further stated that she did not like the English language. During her high school years, she said that she had to take one year of English. According to her, this English course was very basic. In fact, she claimed that she would not show up to the English class because she did not like it. She explained with a sense of irony that she has four brothers and all of them speak and write English well. She also mentioned that her older brother is a medical doctor and that he usually comes to the U.S. to speak in medical conferences.

Aurora explained that she wanted to learn English as a result of the illness of her daughter, who later died of cancer. She explained that while trying to save her life in a U.S. hospital where hardly anyone spoke Spanish, she could not even ask for a glass of water in English. She continued describing that it was very frustrating not being able to communicate or understand when the doctors spoke to her during such a critical time. She usually depended on

the few bilingual nurses, when they were available, to translate as much as possible. Her need to learn English was, therefore, significant.

Before enrolling in this English language institute, she had taken some English courses and a nurse assistant course for several months (although she did not specify the number of months) at X technical school on the U.S. side of the border. At the time of the interviews, she was enrolled in grammar, writing, and conversation courses at the intermediate level during the spring 2011 semester in this English language institute. During the fall 2010 semester she had taken beginning level grammar, writing, and conversation courses.

### **Data Collection**

I began the data collection process during the month of February, two weeks after the start of the spring 2011 semester. As the researcher, I initially engaged in informal conversations with the candidates in order to establish rapport and a comfort zone and to get to know them better and gain their trust (Glaser, 1965). These informal conversations had started the previous semester (Fall 2010), after participants had just been selected and while they were still in the beginner level writing courses. During the semester that the data was collected, students were already in intermediate level writing courses. Data collection consisted of the survey information, classroom observations, participant interviews (audio-recorded), and reflective journals.

Field notes recorded during observations were safely stored in my laptop computer using encrypted files. Surveys, documents, audio-recordings, and other printed or written material were properly coded and kept in a locked file inside my office. As discussed, one of the participants needed to withdraw from the study due an unexpected personal emergency. Given

this situation, this person's records and information collected will be completely destroyed.

Adequate precaution was taken throughout the study to ensure confidentiality.

In order to obtain data in a natural school setting (Yin, 2006), I engaged in classroom observations and interviews (see next section) of the seven participants for a period of three months. Participants were usually interviewed after classroom observations in order to clarify and verify observation field notes and participant responses. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using pseudonyms to de-identify participant names. Classroom observations rendered information that was used to form additional questions for subsequent interviews after the first round (see Appendices C & D for sample questions).

A reflective journal was assigned individually to all seven participants. In this journal, participants were asked to record notes and ideas about how their L1 was accessed to scaffold their second language learning. Participating students were asked to jot down any strategies they used with their first language as they "picked up" second language skills. In order to facilitate journal responses, students were asked to write in their first language. All participants kept their journals for on-going note taking. Refer to Appendix E2 to review potential reflective journal prompts. In the next section, I discuss observations, interviews, and journal writing in detail.

**Observations.** Observations constituted an integral part of my data collection. I decided to do observations in equal segments of fifteen, twenty, thirty, and sixty minutes at a time, depending on the class lesson, types of activities, or rhythm of the class. For example, students who were attending a Tuesday and Thursday morning class were observed mostly between fifteen and twenty-five minutes each time. However, I would occasionally continue my observations for up to forty-five minutes during lessons that involved extensive interaction.

Student interaction and contribution to the class yielded valuable information to analyze behavior and learning practices.

During my observations, I originally planned to dedicate one observation session per student per visit. My goal was to do ten observations per student throughout the three month period. However, it soon became a challenge because four participants were attending the same class (Class A) with the same instructor on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Two other participants were together in another class (Class B) with a different instructor during the same time (as Class A) also on Tuesdays and Thursdays. One more participant was attending an evening class (Class C). The last participant was attending a Saturday morning class (Class D). This English language institute program does not usually offer the same courses during the same times. However, because of excessive enrollment during the spring 2011 semester, a large group of students had to be split and became Class A and Class B.

In terms of time and the frequency of the classes, my goal of ten separate observations per student would be almost impossible to accomplish. Therefore, I decided to do simultaneous observations of the four students in class A during my visits. While this continued to be a challenge, it worked out better because I was able to target specific behavior (e.g., dictionary use, L1 use with classmates, L1 use with instructor, etc.) and compare the behavior of the other participants at the same time. For classes A and B, I ended up doing simultaneous observations of fifteen, twenty-five, or thirty minutes each day. Because of the arrangement of the students' and the instructor's desks facing to one side of the classroom, I usually placed my laptop on the podium that is used for powerpoint presentations located in the corner of the classroom. Since this was one of the larger classrooms and the group was still relatively large, I frequently had to walk around during students' activities to be able to hear and see what students had on their

desks and to listen to the language (L1 or L2) they were using. At the beginning, I felt like the group was intrigued to know about my presence in their class. After a couple of visits, I got the impression that everyone simply ignored me, and that was good.

For the other participants in classes C and D, I had no problems at all. Class C was an evening course that met for one hour and forty-five minutes also on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Unlike the morning classes, however, evening classes were far more relaxed because of the maturity of older students and the fewer number of classes taking place. In this class I was able to observe for sixty minutes during three visits and forty-five minutes in another visit. I usually sat in the very back of the room targeting the participant. This location allowed me to capture materials used, language used, classmate interaction, and behavior. The quiet atmosphere of this evening class provided more opportunity to detail.

The last participant was enrolled in a morning Saturday class (Class D). Again, I had no problems observing this participant because classes on Saturdays were somewhat more relaxed. Almost all my observations for this participant were forty-five minutes each. Since this was a smaller group, I usually sat in one of the back desks of the same row where the participant sat. Because of the low-tone of most of the classes that I observed for this participant, it was rather difficult to see many changes in this participant's behavior and participation. While the accessibility of this class was easy, it was very difficult to identify significant variation in the behavior and performance of this student.

In doing observations, I intended to maintain a regular and consistent pattern of visits to the classrooms. However, during some visits I could not accomplish scheduled observations because of student taking exams or absences. When students took exams there was hardly anything to note during a period-long exam, as no interaction and no speaking was allowed. As

far as absences, however, I always had the advantage of observing the “other” participants in classes where more than one participant was enrolled (e.g., class A & class B). Fortunately, there was only one time in class C where the participant was absent on a day of an observation visit.

An important point that influenced the participation, behavior, and, perhaps, even language use, was the dynamics of the courses where the participants were registered. Instructors played a key role in student performance. One instructor, for example, involved and engaged all students with enthusiasm and students were constantly performing and practicing their learned skills. Another instructor, on the other hand, was far less motivated and this attitude was certainly transmitted to students. This instructor’s lack of encouragement and motivation also significantly affected student behavior. This instructor happened to be the same instructor for the other class that was observed. Another instructor was very diligent in the approach used and, although this person was not as energetic as the first instructor described, the method of engaging and maintaining a good learning environment significantly influenced all students in the class.

**Interviews.** While observations provide realistic representations of student performance, interviews were necessary to confirm or contradict what went on in the classrooms. Like the observations, I intended to have a consistent pattern of interviews with all participants in two rounds. The first round of interviews, I thought, would take place after the second or third observation, while the second round would take place after the eighth or ninth. However, because of other personal priorities on the part of the participants, it became very difficult to maintain such consistency.



My original plan for the morning classes was to do observations and schedule interviews after participants' last class the day the observation took place, in this case, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Most of the students enrolled in Tuesday and Thursday morning classes generally enrolled in all three classes (writing, grammar, and conversation) throughout the morning. The schedule was set to have the first class run from 8:00am to 9:45am (writing), the second class from 10:00am to 11:45am (grammar), and the third class from 12:00pm to 1:45pm (conversation). The classes that I observed were the first classes (8:00am to 9:45am - writing) of the Tuesday and Thursday sequence. Therefore, after the first observed class, I asked students to come see me for an interview after their last class on that day (12:00pm to 1:45pm). I did not want to ask students to see me for interviews in between classes because there were only fifteen minutes that students usually used to buy a snack.

My attempt to bring students for interviewing was usually challenged. I always asked students for their most convenient time to see me and they usually told me that their best time was at the end of all their classes. It may have been several reasons that many times students simply did not show up for the interview. First, after having been in class for over five hours students may have been tired and hungry and gone to eat and rest. Two, some of the participants lived across the border or in another town within a thirty to forty-mile radius and may have had time limitations. Third, some of the participants had to catch a ride home and could not afford to spend more time than that of the classes. Fourth, some of the participants simply could have forgotten. The only thing I was left to do was to try to catch them in between their other two classes or at the end of the morning period to remind them about the interview. Realistically, trying to call participants to come for an interview on a day other than their scheduled classes or trying to meet them elsewhere other than the school seemed almost impossible. In fact, simply

trying to contact them when not in school seemed to be impossible. In spite of these difficulties, however, I was fortunate enough to interview all participants in a timely manner.

During the interviews all participants were cooperative and thoughtful about answering all questions. All participants but one felt relaxed and comfortable when answering the questions I was asking. In fact, most of them seemed excited to answer my questions and contribute to the study. The one participant who seemed to be nervous at some point during the second interview may have been one of the youngest, if not, the youngest of all participants. Although this participant displayed an image of low self-esteem, the answers that the student provided were thorough, clear, and productive.

All interviews took place in my office. During each interview, I thanked each participant for taking the time to be there and assisting with that portion of the study. For every interview, the participant sat in one of the chairs in front of my desk and we were both face to face. The audio-recorder was placed right in front of each interviewee. If conversation was initiated right before the actual interview, I used the same conversation to lead into the interview questions. However, even when conversation was the ice-breaker, I usually did not turn on the audio recorder until right before the very first question, and this made it easier for the interviewee to feel more comfortable. I conducted every interview by having the questions on my computer screen and reading them to the participant, although not necessarily in the same order.

**Reflective journals.** As I observed participants and received their feedback from the interviews, I also needed a more personalized form of input. For this input, I requested written reflections on journal entries. I gave each participant a spiral notebook along with a handout (Appendix E2) that had a general question that was followed by sub-questions to help them

complete each individual journal entry. After I gave the notebooks to each participant, I explained to them individually that they did not have to answer any questions, but only guide themselves with how they would answer the general question. I issued out these notebooks during the early part of February and asked them to write their reflections based on the general question and the sub-questions that were in the handout that was also given to them.

The objective was for participants to write each reflection preferably at the end of each class, although for one participant each class met once a week. In the interest of collecting information that was truthful and well-thought, I asked participants to write in their L1. By not forcing students to write in the L2 ensured more accurate and concise opinions of how L1 was or was not useful. I also wanted participants to take their time and to feel comfortable when writing by not imposing deadlines. The less pressured students felt about this task, the more elaborative their reflections would be.

No names, school identification numbers, or personal information was used or requested from the participants. In order to maintain confidentiality, I asked each participant to simply note their participant number and the date of the reflection on every sheet of paper. As the researcher, I needed to ensure that participants were informed time and again about the seriousness of their anonymity. Data collection began during the spring 2011 semester upon approval of the corresponding IRB proposal. The data collection process was completed at the end of the semester and all data was analyzed in the subsequent months.

**Data Analysis**

The first step in the data analysis process is to prepare and organize the classroom observations, the interview transcriptions, and the reflective journals to obtain a general sense and overall meaning (Creswell, 2009).

Observation field notes will be analyzed and patterns noted. The objective will be to understand if and how students use their L1 to engage in and understand lessons. Interview transcriptions will be reviewed and categorized for patterns of participant opinion and comment information. Initial interviews will be compared with subsequent interviews. Student opinions on how their L1 is used will be identified to see if student perceptions on the use of their own L1, if any, changes as they move into more complex lessons.

The reflective journals of each participant will also be read to mark similarities or differences within each learner. Patterns of similarities or differences will be identified and coded in a matrix (Hubbard & Power, 1999) developed based on topics or themes of language learning (e.g., seeking cognates, doing translations, language comparison, etc.) that derive from the journal entries (Creswell, 2009). Under the constant comparison method, incidents in each category will be compared with other incidents that are coded in the same category (Glaser, 1965). After coding patterns of information, the most common uses of students' L1 will be identified. Along with coding and categorizing the information drawn from the reflective journals, transcriptions from audio-recorded interviews, classroom observation field notes will also be coded (Creswell, 2009; Hubbard & Power 1999; Yin, 2006). If triangulation exists, similarities in the ways that students draw on their L1 as they develop academic English will be identified. Chapter 4 will provide a more detailed description of data results and findings.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In the field of adult ESL education, researchers can find numerous topics of important issues that are yet to be explored. One such topic is the use of L1 in the adult ESL classroom. Examining all studies directly linking L1 use with adult ESL populations (or the adult second language learner) led me to establish connections with other studies dealing with ESL college experiences, studies that examine the transfer of L1 to L2, studies on pedagogical approaches, and students' and teachers' perceptions of L1 use in the L2 classroom.

Upon reviewing these articles, I learned that the topic of L1 use in the adult ESL classroom is a widely studied area. First language in the adult ESL setting is characterized as a resource and broadly used in many Intensive English programs in many English-speaking countries other than the United States.

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs were identified by Creswell (2009). From the studies reviewed in this chapter, distinct patterns of data collection were followed in direct relation to the research problem posed for each study, as each research problem basically shaped the research design, strategy of inquiry, and research method. The most common research method utilized by almost all the researchers was questionnaires. Other research methods included interviews, observations, audio recordings, texts analyses, descriptive statistics, and surveys, supporting qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs.

This dissertation study was qualitative in nature consisting of classroom observations, participant interviews, and reflective journals. The following are the research questions that guided the study:

- 1) How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?
- 2) What are the different first language learning practices (e.g., asking questions, drawing on cognates, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners used during their L1 education experience?
- 3) How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?

Chapter 4 will begin by presenting the data analysis. Also in this chapter the instruments and a more thorough description of the participants will be given. Each research question will be addressed drawing on the data collected and analyzed. I will conclude the chapter with a summary of the research questions and findings along with a brief introduction of the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### **Introduction**

As adult learners enter ESL programs, many educators and students expect learning to take place exclusively in the target language recognizing such approach as *common sense* (Auerbach, 1993; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009). At the same time, other students expect instructors not only to allow, but also to use their L1 as part of their instruction. Furthermore, some adults who come to this country to learn English for professional, academic, or personal reasons may bring with them a high level of education while others may have a limited academic background (Lukes, 2009; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008).

Adult learners may be recently arrived immigrants or long-term residents (Buttaro & King, 2001). According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2008), many adult learners have lived in this country for over a generation. Those who have lived here for at least seven years are categorized as long-term English language learners (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Long-term English language learners are generally required to take ESL classes for college admission as a result of their low academic proficiency.

Despite how adult learners are categorized and what their expectations on ESL teaching norms are, differences in educational level may significantly affect how students' L1 is or is not used. While the common practice of requiring only the target language in many adult ESL classrooms continues, it has been argued that allowing the use of students' L1 as part of the learning increases the rate of second language acquisition.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine *if* and *how* adult English language learners with a high school or college education in their native language use their L1 to learn academic English in a university English language institute. Another purpose was to learn what perception these students had towards their L1 in an English learning setting. Academically prepared students bring with them school experience that may or may not apply when learning English. Thus, a primary goal was to determine if L1 educated students relied on this education when learning academic English.

This chapter will present the data that were collected in the course of the spring 2011 semester in a university language institute. One purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate if and how adult adequate formal learners use their L1 during their ESL education. For the purposes of this study, adequate formal learners are those who graduated from high school or college in their country of origin as opposed to those who had a lower level of education in their L1.

A second purpose was to examine students' perspectives on the use of their L1 during their ESL learning process, while at the same time gathering quantitative data that strengthened the findings of the study. Creswell (2009) explains that "qualitative and quantitative data can be merged into one large database or the results used side by side to reinforce each other" (p. 14). The quantitative component of this research study supplemented and supported the qualitative findings.



### **Problem**

Irrespective of students' educational level in their L1, many adult ESL programs enforce policies that require teaching approaches that use the target language as the exclusive form of instruction without regard to students' native language (L1) (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Cummins, 2007; Edstrom, 2006; García, 2010; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2003; Wigglesworth, 2005). Contrary to this approach, however, research has shown that using students' L1 is beneficial for L2 acquisition (Auerbach 1993; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Murray, 2005; Wigglesworth, 2005).

### **Questions**

The current study investigated the following three questions related to L1 use in the adult ESL classroom:

- 1) How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?
- 2) What are the different learning practices (e.g., asking questions, drawing on cognates, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners used during their L1 educational experience?
- 3) How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?

### **Procedure**

The procedure to conduct this study involved the sample and setting, the data collection process, and the organization of data. All these areas along with a brief discussion are presented in the next section.

### **Sample and Setting**

The study focused on seven participants and examined their use, if any, of their L1 during their writing courses as they learned academic English in an adult ESL program. All participants were adequate formal learners. For the purposes of this dissertation study, adequate formal learners were defined as those students who graduated from high school and/or earned a college degree in their country of origin. Four participants were high school graduates and three were college graduates. All seven participants came from Mexico and were educated there.

Three participants were registered in the same morning class with instructor “A.” Two participants were registered in another morning class in a different classroom with instructor “B.” One participant was registered in an evening class with instructor “C.” The seventh participant was registered in the Saturday class with instructor “B” (See figure 3 below).

Instructor “A” was a bilingual instructor who sometimes accepted students’ use of L1 during class activities when students asked questions or gave answers. Although this instructor still encouraged the use of English as much as possible, she occasionally used one word translations in the students’ L1 to clarify a concept that would have otherwise taken more time if explained only in English.

Instructor “B” was also bilingual although much stricter in his use of English inside and outside of class. This instructor demanded English-only in his classroom at all times. During

observations in this instructor's classroom, he was never heard speaking in the students' L1. Participants in this class seemed a little more reluctant to interact and participate in class activities.

Instructor "C" was a native English speaker. This instructor also demanded English-only in her classroom. Students seemed more obligated to use English-only in this class, whether they felt comfortable using it or not. The participant who was enrolled in this class was usually more reserved in his responses to questions directed to the entire class. According to his interview statements, this participant was still glad to have this type of challenge to force him to use English.

Although instructor attitude and influence in the classes observed were not within the scope of this dissertation study, a few participants expressed their opinions regarding how bilingual or monolingual instructors affected their willingness or unwillingness to use their L1.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place in the form of classroom observations, student interviews, and analyses of student reflective journals. In order to obtain data in a more academically-oriented ESL class, data collection took place in the writing courses at the intermediate level. The intermediate level identified the second semester of this language institute where the primary focus of the writing courses was paragraph development. The goal was to collect data in a subject area that guided students into learning an important academic skill. In spite of the participants' L1 educational level, writing is a subject that is not given much emphasis in Mexico, according to some comments from participants. This apparent lack of critical focus on writing skills in the Mexican education system allowed the investigation of how L1 educated

participants confronted an academically-oriented ESL course in an area not too familiar to them in L1 or L2.

Classroom observations were planned accordingly. Four classrooms were visited to collect the necessary data. All except one of the classes met two times per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for one hour and forty-five minutes each class. Five of the participants were enrolled in morning classes and one was enrolled in an evening course. The other participant was enrolled in a Saturday class that met for three hours and forty-five minutes. Figure 3 below shows a breakdown of observation and class meeting information.

#### CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

<u>No. of Participants</u>	<u>Class Schedule</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Class Times</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
3	Morning	TTh	8:00 – 9:45am	A
2	Morning	TTh	8:00 – 9:45am	B
1	Evening	TTh	8:00 – 9:45pm	C
1	Morning	Sat.	8:30am – 12:15pm	B

**Figure 3: Observation of Participants in Writing Courses**

Participants who were enrolled in the Tuesday and Thursday morning classes were observed ten times, the participant in the Tuesday and Thursday evening class was observed six times, and the participant enrolled in the longer class on Saturdays was observed five times.

Observations of all Tuesday and Thursday classes lasted from thirty minutes to forty-five minutes to an hour. The length of the observation depended largely on the lesson taking place. Sometimes students were taking a major exam or were getting ready to go to the computer lab to work on an assignment in the computers. Observations in the computer lab sometimes did not

entirely display classroom behavior for the purposes of this study. On these occasions there were little useful data to be collected.

Once in the classrooms, capturing some of the spoken words during group activities became difficult at times because, as an observer, the intention was not to interrupt any part of the class taking place. The location in the classrooms during each observation was either in the back of the classroom or in one of the front corners, depending on the classroom. Some of the classrooms were bigger than others and this allowed more flexibility to move more freely when there was a need to get closer to a group or participant. Sometimes it was required to get up and walk around to be able to observe what participants had on their tables and to record some of their expressions made in Spanish or English. The occasional walking around apparently did not affect the course of the classes after a while. Although at the beginning of the observations students wondered about the visit, my presence in all the classrooms eventually became unnoticed.

### **Organization of Data**

The data presented in this chapter are organized around the research questions. The first question was: *How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?* To answer this question data were collected through classroom observations. Table 6 (p. 166) demonstrates the number of instances where participants used their L1 during each of the observation visits. After the data on the frequency of L1 use are presented, Table 11 (p. 172) shows the circumstances under which participants used their L1 during their regular class sessions. Since each instructor had their own individual style of teaching and this may have impacted participant use of L1, data

were also collected to examine how much L1 was used with each instructor. Table 12 (p. 177) summarizes the categories of L1 use by all participants organized by instructor.

In addition to collecting and analyzing data from observations, data were gathered from participant self-reporting reflective journals (Appendix E2). Reflective journal data supplemented the data shown on Tables 6 (p. 166) and 11 (p. 172). The reflective journals allowed participants to describe what they experienced shortly after attending class sessions. The data provided by participants are summarized on Table 13 (p. 182).

After showing the data collected that served to answer the first research question, data were collected to answer the second question that read, *What are the different first language learning practices (e.g., asking questions, drawing on cognates, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners use?* In order to answer this question, classroom observation data were used looking more specifically at participant learning practices in the classroom. Also used were interview data that revealed more conscious knowledge of learning styles used during their L1 educational experience that each participant described as most useful. Tables 26 and 27 (p. 226-227) show the categorization of participant learning practices during classroom observations and interviews respectively.

The third question was: *How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?* To answer this question data were collected exclusively from interviews. Interviews took place using semi-structured questions (Brenner, 2006) and responses that ranged from negative to uncertain to positive. Participants were able to elaborate on their respective opinions.

## Results

The next section presents the results of the three research questions individually. A description of each question is presented along with tables and figures that help organize and display the findings accordingly. Each section is identified by the respective research question.

### Research Question Number One

The first question was: *How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?* Classroom observations were the main data collection method for this question. Through observations it was determined how participants accessed their L1. Behaviors such as asking questions, speaking to classmates, responding to instructor questions, or working in groups were recorded in each of the classrooms observed.

This two-part question required information from two different perspectives. One perspective concentrated on an overall use of students' L1. The goal was to gather quantifiable data to determine the frequency of L1 use by individual participant. The second perspective targeted specific circumstances that drove participants to use their L1. The response for the first part of the question can be found in the data presented in Table 6 (p. 166), which indicates the overall number of times participants used their L1. The data to answer the second part of the question can be found in Table 11 (p. 172) which shows the circumstances under which participants used their L1 measuring the frequency of each category. In addition to finding the frequency and the circumstances for students' use of their L1, Table 12 (p. 177) identifies the overall frequency of L1 use for each category organized by instructor. Each of the tables

provides quantifiable data that help formulate a measurable response to research question number one.

**Frequency of L1 use.** Data were collected through the number of instances, if any, that participants used their L1. The frequency of L1 use by participants was collected in general and without regard to the reasons why it was used. Exclusive observational data were used to obtain the quantifiable measure of L1 use by each individual participant in order to find the frequency of its use. Table 6 below summarizes these data.

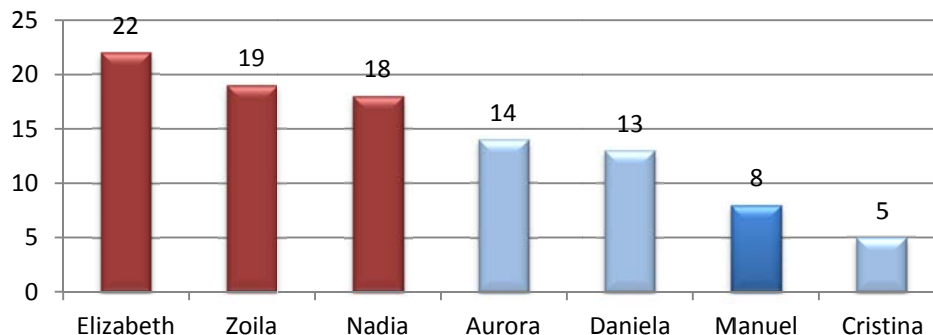
**Table 6:**

*Overall Frequency of L1 use*

Participant	Instances of L1 Use During Observations
<b>Elizabeth</b>	22
<b>Nadia</b>	18
<b>Cristina</b>	5
<b>Zoila</b>	19
<b>Daniela</b>	13
<b>Manuel</b>	8
<b>Aurora</b>	14
<b>Total</b>	99

Some participants used their L1 more than others and under different circumstances. Elizabeth displayed the highest number of L1 utterances and Cristina exhibited the lowest use throughout the entire observation period. Table 6 displays data in the order in which participants were observed. Figure 4 below illustrates these data organized from highest to lowest user of L1.





**Figure 4: Overall Frequency of L1 Use by Participant**

The highest users of L1 (Elizabeth, Zoila, and Nadia) were enrolled in the class with instructor “A” where the dynamics and the interaction were generally high. Aurora, Daniela, and Cristina were enrolled in classes with instructor “B” respectively where the interaction was low and students’ L1 was seldom used by the instructor. Manuel was enrolled in the class with instructor “C” where the class was usually interactive and engaging, but the instructor was a native English speaker.

**Circumstances of L1 use.** The second part of question number one dealt with the behavior of every participant as they engaged in class activities or discussions. Student behavior provided the situational data that helped determine some of the circumstances under which students used their L1. For example, in several observations it was recorded that participants used their L1 frequently each time they gathered in groups to work on class activities. In other times participants used their L1 when they needed to confirm if they had understood the assignment correctly. The following are examples of instances of L1 use by different participants coded by circumstances:

**Table 7:*****Observational Notes and Corresponding Codes***

<b>Observation Notes</b>	<b>Code (Circumstances)</b>	<b>Code Description</b>
The students in this group discuss <u>mostly in Spanish</u> ; except when they answer a question aloud	5	Interacting in Groups
The instructor gives a handout for students to work on in groups; the participant immediately gathers with 2 other students; the interaction begins <u>in Spanish</u>	5	Interacting in Groups
The student suddenly gets her dictionary out and starts looking for words	3	To Translate
She continues to speak to her classmate <u>in Spanish</u> while other students write their sentences on the board	2	To Interact Non-Academically
The instructor reviews the paragraph and the students make comments, <u>in Spanish</u> , about it	4	To Respond to Instructor

Regardless of how the participants used their L1, they appeared to engage in this behavior without an awareness of the fact that they were using their L1. The circumstances under which participants used their L1 were coded and organized into 5 different categories. These categories consisted of: 1) Interacting with classmates academically, 2) Interacting with classmates non-academically, 3) Translating, 4) Responding to Instructor, and 5) Interacting in Groups. For purposes of this study, each of the categories had their particular description and each description is presented next.

***Interacting with classmates academically.*** The category labeled *interacting with classmates academically* described instances when participants asked questions about the assignments, discussed answers, or inquired about spelling or meaning of words. For example, Elizabeth conversed periodically on different occasions with her classmates about assignments as shown in Table 8 below:

**Table 8:**

***Observation Notes and Category 1 – Elizabeth***

Elizabeth	The student discusses the assignment with another student in Spanish	To Interact with Classmates – Academically (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student discusses further with another student in Spanish, “así no es”, “yo lo puse así”	To Interact with Classmates – Academically (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student answers questions from her classmate in Spanish	To Interact with Classmates – Academically (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student discusses the examples in Spanish with her classmate	To Interact with Classmates – Academically (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student talks to her classmate in Spanish about the sentences on the activity	To Interact with Classmates – Academically (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student responds in Spanish to another classmates that asks her a questions about the assignment	To Interact with Classmates – Academically (Code 1)

The observations indicated that all participants used their L1 under this category. Zoila and Aurora were the two participants with the highest number of instances where they used their L1 to interact with their peers. Cristina, on the other hand, was the participant with the lowest number of instances under this category.

***Interacting with classmates non-academically.*** While interacting with classmates academically indicated class-related conversations, the category labeled *interacting with classmates non-academically* reflected interaction that did not involve topics about their class. These types of conversations among students constituted personal discussions that were made after an assignment was completed and when there was time for social interaction. As an example, Zoila at one point talked with a classmate in her L1 during an observation immediately after both had finished an exam. Their interaction was more personal than class-related, since they spoke as they put all their materials away and got ready to exit the classroom.

***Translating.*** The category labeled *translating* referred to instances where participants either asked for the translation of a word from L1 to English or from English to L1. During class conversations, participants sometimes asked for the translation of a word that was to be used in a paragraph or discussed as part of a topic. Daniela, for example, was recorded having used her L1 under this category when she asked about a writing topic as described below:

**Table 9:**

***Daniela's Translation Category – Sample Table***

Daniela	The participant asks the instructor about the translation of “bailestípicos” <u>in English</u> to include in her paragraph about Mexico	To Translate (Code 3)
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Other examples included asking the instructor privately and individually for translations about words in English and also participants giving the translation of words aloud.

***Responding to the instructor.*** The category of *responding to the instructor* referred to situations when participants used their L1 to emphasize their answers to questions posed by the instructor. For example, during an observation it was recorded that Nadia gave a response in English and then in her L1. Elizabeth similarly used her L1 to reinforce the response given by another student in an attempt to emphasize the right answer. These two examples are presented in Table 10 below:

**Table 10:**

***Observation Notes and Category 6 – Nadia and Elizabeth***

Nadia	The participant responds aloud in English, then in Spanish, “ah, primero, soccer”	To Respond to Instructor (Code 4)
Elizabeth	The participant voices or reinforces a response from another student stating a response in Spanish to make her comment	To Respond to Instructor (Code 4)

Although this category was one of the least used, more than half of the participants used it. From all participants, Elizabeth, Nadia, Manuel, and Aurora, used their L1 for this purpose.

***Interacting in groups.*** The final category was *interacting in groups*. This category was a very common way of using L1 among all participants, particularly those who had bilingual instructors. The bilingual instructor who was more flexible with the use of students’ L1

(Instructor “A”) appeared to be the one who had more dynamic classes. The interaction using students’ L1 within groups consisted mainly of sharing, discussing, and confirming answers. With this category being the second highest in number, almost all participants were involved in group activities.

Interacting in groups provided more opportunities for students to use their L1. In fact, it was nearly impossible to find a group of students not using their L1 throughout a given task, particularly when the instructor was not near them. Even when the assignment instructions were clearly explained before each group activity, students often required an extra assurance that what they understood was correct. While the objective of having students work together was to encourage interaction and discussion in English, it seemed like all students still relied on their L1 in one way or another to work and complete their assignments.

All uses of students’ L1 were recorded and coded under the 5 different categories mentioned. Table 11 below shows a summary of each category from the respective participant.

**Table 11:**

*L1 use Coded by Circumstances*

Participant	To Interact with classmates academically (What is the assignment? What is the right answer? How to write something? Comments (Code 1)	To Interact with classmates non-academically (Code 2)	To Translate (Code 3)	To Respond to Instructor (Code 4)	To Interact in Groups (Code 5)
Elizabeth	10	4	1	1	6
Nadia	5	1	0	1	11
Cristina	4	0	1	0	0
Zoila	13	1	1	0	4

<b>Daniela</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Manuel</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Aurora</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>

Observational data were analyzed, categorized, and coded according to students' L1 use. Out of the five categories, communicating with classmates for academic purposes constituted the highest category of L1 use by participants totaling 59 times. Observational data showed that participants interacted with classmates for several reasons. A very common reason for student interaction using L1 was to confirm and/or clarify the right answers during individual or group activities. Several times during group tasks students asked each other about accurate answers on writing assignments (e.g., sentence completion, paragraph editing, etc.) that they needed to discuss and work together. It appeared to be easier for almost all of them to share their answers in their L1 in order to get a quick response and move on to the next question or sentence.

Another common reason for classmate communication using L1 was to ask each other what the given assignment was. Although all class lectures and explanations were delivered entirely in English, some students had difficulty understanding clearly some of the assignment instructions. For this reason, there was a tendency to rely on classmates who had less difficulty understanding and who possessed better comprehension skills.

Yet another reason for students' use of L1 was to ask for help. It was noted during observations that students often asked each other about how to spell a word or what the meaning of unknown words or phrases was whenever the instructor was busy assisting other students. This type of classmate assistance was very common whether students worked in groups or individually. It was found that participants relied extensively on each other for anything having to do with class assignments and they did this by using their L1.

The next highest category was *interacting in groups* totaling 22 times. Instructors used cooperative learning activities frequently in an effort to stimulate interaction in English. While much of the conversation was done in English, participants generally used their L1 within their groups to ensure that they were all in agreement on the right answers. Using L1 in groups was easier and seemingly more comfortable for all students because everyone had to interact at the same time, and this made it difficult for the instructors to monitor and pressure students into using only English.

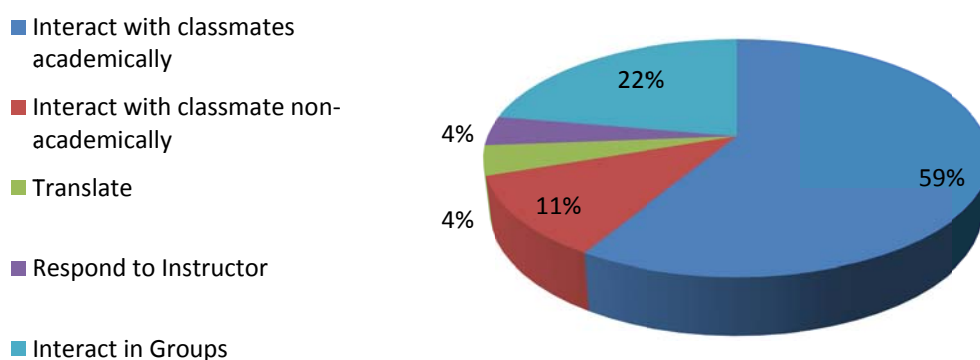
The next highest category, totaling 11 times, was *classmate interaction* for reasons not related to classroom assignments or activities. This category constituted participant comments made to each other while the instructors either walked around or helped other students. There was a difference between academic and non-academic interaction during observations. For example, when academic interaction took place participants generally pointed to the textbook or handout they were working on. Also, participants made it very obvious when they used questions like, “¿Cuáles la número tres...? (Which is number three?)” or “¿Cómo se dice...? (How do you say...?)” Non-academic expressions, in contrast, were usually accompanied by smiles or facial expressions to each other indicating more personal communication. Female students sometimes talked (using their L1) and laughed at each other while putting on make-up or while they checked their cellular phones. Overall, interaction with classmates was a very common category when using L1.

The two lowest categories identified were *translation* and *responding to instructor*. These two categories totaled four times each. The category of *translating* indicated instances when participants voiced a direct translation from English to their L1. When participants used their L1 under this category, they either asked the instructor for the translation, they gave the



translation to the instructor upon request, or they asked a classmate for the translation of a term. The other category was *responding to the instructor*. Under this category students generally used their L1 to respond when they ran out of words in English while trying to answer questions aloud from instructors. When participants tried to respond to the instructor in English, they sometimes displayed frustration from their inability to use English fluently and completely. It was during these occasions that their L1 was accessed and used to supplement their expressions. Occasionally participants used their L1 to assist their peers during question and answer sessions with the instructors to clarify meaning of words. One participant used her L1 to help a classmate reinforce what the classmate was trying to say when she was unable to do so in English.

The sample group of adequate formal schooled participants used their L1 mostly to engage in academically-oriented interaction more than any other category. The nature of this interaction involved clarifying assignments, inquiring about the correct answer, or asking for the correct spelling of words. Other categories reflected fewer occurrences bringing their numbers lower. The graph on figure 5 below displays these data.



**Figure 5: Percentages from Categories of L1 Use**

**Instructors.** Much of the interaction was guided by the learning environment created by each writing instructor. Out of the three instructors, two were bilingual (English/Spanish) and one was monolingual (English). One of the bilingual instructors (Instructor “A”) was more likely to use two languages, while the other bilingual instructor (Instructor “B”) almost always used English only. Despite the attitude of the instructor, the pace of the class, or the willingness of students to participate, the data indicated that much of the L1 used was during circumstances where students communicated with their peers.

Instructors had individual teaching approaches and language guidelines. Both the teaching style of each instructor and the language guidelines they established in their classrooms were observed during classrooms observations. The teaching styles of instructors “A” and “C” allowed for more interaction and participation. The teaching style of instructor “B” was more teacher-centered and less inviting for students to participate. Language guidelines set up by all three instructors dictated continuous use of English in the classroom at all times. These guidelines were verbally enforced by all three instructors throughout their lessons. It was observed, however, that only instructor “A” was more tolerant in students’ occasional use of their L1. Because of this instructor’s flexibility, the likelihood of L1 use in this classroom was relatively high. On the other hand, instructor “B” was also bilingual, but was very strict with the use of English-Only in the classroom. L1 use in this classroom was less likely to occur than with instructor “A.” Instructor “C” was monolingual and students had to use English when interacting with this instructor. Although instructor “C” promoted an English-Only classroom environment, she maintained a dynamic rhythm in her class and students seemed to be well engaged in every lesson, even though the probability of L1 use remained low. Table 12 below summarizes the instances where participants used their L1 with their respective instructors.

**Table 12:***Summary of Categories of L1 Use Organized by Instructor*

		Categories					
Instructor	Number of Participants	To Interact with classmates academically (what is the assignment? What is the right answer? How to write something? Comments (Code 1)	To Interact with classmates non-academically (Code 2)	To Translate (Code 3)	To Respond to Instructor (Code 4)	To Interact in Groups (Code 5)	Totals in L1 Use organized by instructor
<b>A Bilingual</b>	3	27	6	2	2	21	<b>58</b>
<b>B Bilingual</b>	3	26	3	2	1	1	<b>33</b>
<b>C Monolingual</b>	1	5	2	0	1	0	<b>8</b>

Participants may have wanted to use their L1 more or less frequently, but their freedom to use it or not was affected by the classroom environment. For example, during visits some participants were more active than others and this was perceivably influenced by the teaching approach used by each instructor. The learning environment established by the teaching styles of instructor “B,” for instance, was not conducive to participation in English or L1. In this particular class, students seemed to be reluctant to participate because the teaching approach used by this instructor was more teacher-centered. Participation in this class was mostly responding in chorus to questions asked by the instructor, since individual responses seldom

occurred. There were no group activities and sometimes the classroom was completely quiet. Limited interaction was noticeable and, as a result, it appeared that students sometimes did not fully understand the lessons presented. Furthermore, since this instructor was somewhat strict in students using English at all times, it seemed more challenging for students to ask questions in English about assignment clarification. Because of limited participation and stricter English use guidelines, some participants used their L1 more moderately than others (e.g. Cristina [5] and Manuel [8] compared to Elizabeth [22] and Zoila [19]) as can be seen in Table 6 (p. 166). As a result, limited participation seemed to hinder their understanding of some class content material. The following statement illustrates how Daniela was confused in one particular class session:

**[Confusion]**

The participant talks to her classmate in Spanish saying “No tengo idea...” (*I have no idea*)

Instructor “A,” on the other hand, promoted extensive interaction in English and this interactive openness led to higher possibilities of L1 use by participants. Participants in this instructor’s classroom seemed more enthusiastic to learn and participate. The following are some of the observation recordings from this instructor’s classroom:

**[Use of L1 in group activity]**

The participant continues to discuss or answer questions from her classmate in Spanish....

**[Participation in Class]**

The instructor asks if there is anything else to be done on a specific sentence on the assignment; the participant responds “I did not do anything” (meaning there was no correction needed)...

**[Participation in Class]**

The participant voices out that the sentence being read is incorrect; she says “it’s a fragment”....

**[Participation in Class]**

The participant continues, “by the time we got home, I decided to keep it...”

Whether students used their L1 or not, their participation seemed to be the direct result of the encouragement given by each instructor. In both of the examples given, there were apparent differences in tone and dynamics from one class to the other. Although the description of the class in the first example is derived from interaction between two classmates, it clearly indicates lack of comprehension. The description of the class in the second example indicates a more engaged lesson where the participant is not only involved in the discussion, but also gets other classmates to interact. In this class the probability of the use of English or L1 seemed higher.

**Reflective journals.** In order to correlate observational data and what participants themselves reported about their classes, reflective journals were assigned to participants as an added data collection component to answer the first research question (See Appendix E2). Documents such as participant journals are important components of a qualitative research data collection process (Creswell, 2009). As they attended their respective classes, students were asked to summarize any learning practices they used that involved their L1. The objective of this form of data collection was to determine how they themselves described their own use, if any, of their L1. Participants were asked to write a summary at the end of each week for a period of two to three months. In trying to reach this objective, participants were asked to record immediate reactions towards the way they learned a specific lesson or lessons. This form of data collection provided an opportunity for participants to think about what it took for them to learn writing skills in English without the pressure of being asked openly in an interview or observed during

class. Since participants wrote in their L1 and there was no pressure of a due date (except for the end of the spring 2011 semester), students had the opportunity to write freely, openly, and individually.

In an effort to stimulate their responses, participants were given a question to focus on. The question was: *How did you use your first language to help you with today's lesson?* Although the question implies that all participants used their L1, it was explained to them that they were free to respond otherwise. Participants were asked to answer in a few sentences what they remembered about the lessons they had each week. The goal was to make them reflect primarily on the learning process, and not necessarily on themselves as learners. Time was spent with each individual participant to make sure that they understood the instructions for completing this data collection task. In order to broaden the main question, the following sub-questions were added to assist them in the development of their responses:

- What questions did you ask your instructor?
- Was any part of the lesson content already familiar to you?
- When you write, do you think in English or Spanish?
- What made it easier for you to understand the lesson today?
- How did the instructor assist you today?
- What did you rely on from your first language in today's lesson?

Some participants elaborated on their answers quite extensively, while others simply provided a brief response. All reflective journals were read, analyzed, and coded into 6 different categories of L1 use. These categories included: 1) Translating, 2) Organizing, 3) L1 School

Reference, 4) Using Cognates, 5) Communicating, and 6) Participating. Each of the participants engaged in the learning categories in different ways.

The practice of *translating* was the highest used with students' L1 with 28 occurrences altogether. Translating was referred to from different angles by different participants. For example, Aurora described in her journal that she used her L1 to translate new words (generally prepositions as she described), write sentences for translating later, and to think and translate before writing in English. Zoila used her L1 in her writing class to write entire paragraphs, first in Spanish and then translate them to English. Daniela used her L1 to translate words to English and relate them to the lesson. Cristina used her L1 to translate words to English in order to understand her reading.

The practice of *organizing* was the second highest with 7 occurrences. Under this category, participants described the use of their L1 as a resource to arrange ideas adequately for easier writing in English. Aurora, Manuel, Daniela, and Cristina described the use of their L1 for organizing and developing better written paragraphs. Participants appeared to fall back on their L1 when they needed not only to be creative, but also organized with English sentence structure.

Another important use of L1 that was identified was to apply concepts that were learned in Mexico. The two participants who described their L1 use for this purpose were Elizabeth and Cristina. They specifically described items that they had learned in Mexico that made it easier for them to better understand their English writing lesson. For example, Cristina described in her journal learning about developing paragraphs that incorporate a sequence or procedure using words such as *first*, *then*, and *finally*. Elizabeth described the brainstorming activity, which she related to her L1 education. She talked about how having seen and having learned this lesson in Mexico helped her better grasp the concept of brainstorming in English as well.

The remaining categories, *using cognates*, *communicating*, and *participating*, were all described by Cristina. For cognates, she explained that at some point the instructor asked students to describe adjectives. Although she did not mention any in her journal, she did state that her knowledge of adjectives in Spanish helped her identify adjectives in English. Her L1 use for communicating was described when she had to interact with a classmate as they both went to the board to write a paragraph. While she described her interaction in English, she stated that her communication with this classmate also had to be in Spanish. The use of L1 for participating was described by Cristina when she had to respond to questions asked by the instructor regarding vocabulary words during a reading assignment. All 3 uses of her L1 were identified as single instances under each category.

After organizing reflective journal data by codes, the number of times each category was identified was counted in order to obtain a measurable response. Table 13 below shows how participants used their L1 in each of the categories as described in their reflective journals.

**Table 13:**

***Summary of L1 Use Based on Participant Reflective Journals***

	Translating	Organizing	L1 School Reference	Using Cognates	Communicate	Participate
<b>Elizabeth</b>	1		2			
<b>Cristina</b>	11	4	2	1	1	1
<b>Zoila</b>	4					
<b>Daniela</b>	6	1				
<b>Manuel</b>		1				
<b>Aurora</b>	6	1				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>



A major problem with students' responses was that some of them did not elaborate on their thoughts. Although it was made clear to them about the way they needed to respond, it was difficult to demand more than what each participant could provide because many of them were already overwhelmed with homework and assignments from their other courses along with their own personal commitments. For unknown reasons, Nadia never submitted her reflective journal despite attempts to locate her several times. Although there were occasional inconsistent patterns of observations and there was limited time for participants to respond and elaborate on the reflective journals, important data were still collected for analysis.

**Use of L1 by participant.** The previous sections presented the overall findings for the seven participants. Observations and interviews revealed differences among the seven students. The following section provides a brief description of student use of L1 drawn from the interview and observation data. Information is presented individually for each participant as a summary of what each student explained during their interviews and performed in class while observed.

***Elizabeth.*** Elizabeth used her L1 often during her classes. She stated that there were two main reasons for using the L1 in the classroom: To communicate with her classmates and to translate unknown words and phrases. Both of these uses were observed in the classroom several times and confirmed during the interviews.

The first reason for using L1 by this student was to communicate. Communication with students was almost entirely done in Spanish. While the instructor lectured, Elizabeth occasionally whispered to a classmate in Spanish about what the lesson involved or to give the answer to a question found in a handout. When the instructor asked questions to the entire group

and someone gave the right answer, Elizabeth generally explained the answer in Spanish to other students who may not have understood. During group activities, she similarly used Spanish to discuss the roles and generally lead the group into the activity to be performed.

The second reason for using L1 was to translate as needed. According to Elizabeth, she thought everything in Spanish first and then she translated to English. However, when asked about the writing class exclusively she claimed that she wrote without thinking too much in Spanish. She further stated that not thinking too much in Spanish depended mainly on what she knew or didn't know. For example, if she had to write something in the present tense, she didn't need to think in Spanish entirely because she already knew the present tense and felt confident using it directly in English. Therefore, when writing in the present tense she usually wrote, or attempted to write already thinking in English.

In contrast to her claims regarding the learning practice of listening only during her L1 education, observations showed Elizabeth's excessive will and motivation to participate in class. Not only did she participate in class, but a high percentage of her participation was conducted in English. This participant claimed that in Mexico she only asked questions and participated in classes that were interesting to her. From the observations it was apparent that the English classes that this student took were not only interesting, but also motivated her to practice her English more and more. When asking questions to the instructor during class, it seemed as if the student was more concerned about getting the information that she needed than whether she asked the question in English correctly or not.

In practicing her English, however, it was noticeable that she had difficulty with the pronunciation of several words. In spite of this difficulty, she continued speaking English to the instructor and occasionally to some of her classmates, since most of her communication with her

peers was generally done in Spanish. The student displayed a strong self-confidence when answering questions asked by the instructor or even by other students. At times she got so involved helping her neighbor classmates that she gave the impression that she acted as a mini instructor or tutor. An example of this was her desire to answer just about all the questions that the instructor asked to the whole class. She never showed any sign of intimidation when giving a response.

In contrast to what she described during the interviews regarding not writing notes during lectures, observations also showed that she frequently engaged in note taking during the writing class as the instructor lectured and/or corrected assignments discussed in class. This was also the case when students were asked to go to the board and write sentences, since Elizabeth usually corrected and took notes when the instructor explained the corrections.

Observations helped both confirm and contradict some of the claims that Elizabeth made during her interviews. Some of the behavior observed indicated patterns of actions that confirmed her claims and beliefs, such as her dislike of using a dictionary or her habit of speaking in her L1 with her classmates in open discussions or group activities. On the other hand, some of the contradictions were clear when she engaged—sometimes excessively—in class discussions and participated in almost all questions/answer sessions after claiming that she only listened during lectures.

**Nadia.** Nadia stated that she used her L1 primarily to translate in order to understand what she wrote. She explained that sometimes she did not understand one word and usually that one word kept her from understanding the rest of a sentence. It was important to investigate, therefore, her approach when engaging in brainstorming sessions. She stated that when she

brainstormed, she thought about the topic and ideas in her L1 first and then translated them to English. During brainstorming sessions she asserted that thinking in her L1 first and then translating to English constituted a big problem for her. She described that when the instructor spoke or asked questions in English she immediately thought of a response in her L1 and then had to translate it to English. The process of translating internally was what she referred to as a big problem.

Another case that Nadia described in relation to the use of her L1 was paragraph writing. She described that, at this point (up until the interview took place), she tried to think directly in English each time she began to write a paragraph. However, she explained that she generally ran into a word that she needed to write in English but did not know how to write it or what the exact meaning of the word was. This, she explained, was when she had to go back to her L1. While her instructor encouraged everyone to use English at all times, Nadia explained that this was always a challenge because she usually had to think about her response in her L1, translate it to English, and finally say it.

Nadia generally seemed to be certain of her responses each time she needed to respond aloud. It was noted several times in observations that she assisted her classmates, mainly using her L1. During group activities she was usually the one leading the discussions and confirming answers with the entire group.

Because of the extensive interaction that usually took place during this writing class, Nadia regularly used her L1 as a way of communicating with her classmates. Many of the students used their L1 to talk to each other and confirm their answers. While many students relied a lot on their English/Spanish dictionaries, Nadia seldom used any of her dictionaries (e.g. English/Spanish or English). She usually had her dictionary on her desk, but hardly ever opened

it. Several times it was recorded in observations that her dictionary was either on her desk but closed or was not seen at all.

While Nadia claimed writing notes and asking questions during her L1 education due to the nature of some of her classes (e.g., civil engineering), other learning behavior was perceived that identified other learning habits that seemingly helped Nadia gain more understanding of the writing process in English. Among the learning practices that she engaged in the most were participation in class, paying close attention to instructions or explanations given by the instructor, and briefly using her dictionary to translate a word. Nadia's performance in the classroom showed that she was far more engaged in her English writing class than she may have been during her university education in Mexico.

***Cristina.*** Cristina used her L1 as a communication medium both inside and outside the classroom. She usually interacted with classmates who shared her L1 to confirm assignments, to obtain the right answers on assignments, or to ask how to say something in English. There were two students in the same writing class whose L1 was not Spanish and sometimes one of these students sat with Cristina in the same table. It was during these instances that Cristina could not entirely use her L1, as this classmate could not fully understand Spanish. Nonetheless, communication with her other peers was one of the main uses for Cristina's L1.

Another use for Cristina's L1 was for learning support. She explained that the grammatical similarities between the two languages (e.g. Spanish and English) helped her better understand English grammar, although she confirmed thinking first in her L1 and then in English. She described how sometimes in the computer lab she took a little more time thinking and organizing her ideas in her L1 and then organizing them in English. As an example she

talked about an assignment where they had to write about the local festivities known as Charro Days during the month of February. She explained that it was more of a double task to think about the topic itself and then about the organization because the organization included thinking in her L1 first. Her biggest challenge, as she described it, was finding the appropriate vocabulary, selecting the right words, and then arranging them in the right order.

From the very beginning of the observations, Cristina gave the impression that she relied excessively on her L1 as she worked in different assignments in class. She continuously depended on her English/Spanish dictionary when writing paragraphs. The writing class where Cristina was enrolled was more focused in paragraph writing and writing sentences on the board. Compared with other writing classes, interaction in this class was somewhat limited both between students and the instructor and among students. Group activities were never recorded during observations. This lack of encouragement to interact may have hindered Cristina's desire to participate. The fact that this particular instructor (Instructor "B") hardly ever used students' L1 may have further kept her from speaking up or asking questions aloud in English.

Cristina, along with other students, usually did not seem certain of how to proceed with her assignments. During observations it was noted many instances that Cristina participated only when asked to do so. She worked on all the assignments and usually interacted, mainly in her L1, with a classmate who spoke the same L1 sitting on the same table with her. Although asking questions was a learning practice that she claimed having used in her L1 education experience, not once was she seen asking any questions in her English writing class. She relied too much on resources such as dictionaries, the internet, and her own classmates for her work.

**Zoila.** One of the most common ways that Zoila used her L1 was to communicate with her classmates during class activities. She usually communicated with her classmates using her L1 either to share answers during editing of written paragraphs or in handouts or to interact with other students during group activities. It was recorded in the observations that only at one point did Zoila use her L1 to provide a translation aloud (Table 11, Code 3, p. 172).

The reason for Zoila's use of L1 with her classmates was more for assisting classmates than asking for help. Zoila was usually the one clarifying issues about different assignments with students sitting near her. Given that everyone in the class knew each other, she was always willing to share her answers with classmates when working during class.

Many group activities took place in Zoila's writing class. During these activities she often used her L1 to discuss, share, and clarify tasks (Table 11, Code 5, p. 172). Although everyone in Zoila's group was often motivated to work together, Zoila was usually the one sought to confirm correctness. The seating arrangement of this class was usually the same and this allowed for the same students to gather together in groups most of the time. One of Zoila's characteristics that showed the motivation she had for learning was her habit of always sitting in the very first row in the front desk. This seating preference seemed to enhance her learning, since she always had the opportunity to participate or ask questions about any given lesson.

Zoila's attitude in the classroom was unique. She usually gave the impression that she enjoyed attending this particular class and this seemed the case because of the high degree of participation in English that she exhibited. Although she indicated asking questions and writing notes as her major form of learning while in Mexico, learning practices used in her English writing class were beyond only writing and only asking questions. Zoila was one of the most motivated students in this class and her participation was almost guaranteed each day. At some

point she even seemed like a tutor because of the dependency that other students had on her. She often assisted her peers, although mostly in her L1.

During observations it was noted that her use of the dictionary was minimal. It was recorded several times that she had her dictionary on her desk, but did not use it or she just did not have a dictionary on her desk at all. Although she mentioned using her dictionary often in all her classes, she also talked about a list of verbs that was given to her in her writing class. This list of verbs was used by her as a reference for vocabulary.

Throughout the observations Zoila participated in class in different ways. Not only was she ready to respond to the instructor's questions upon request, but she was usually one of the few volunteering to respond. Although she used her L1 many times with her peers, she had no difficulty voicing her comments, answers, or opinions in English aloud. While other students in the class were able to provide accurate answers with some pronunciation problems, Zoila hardly showed any difficulty with pronunciation.

An important factor that appeared to influence Zoila's participation and motivation to interact and feel confident about herself was the learning environment of this class. In contrast to other classes, this instructor (Instructor "A") occasionally used students' L1 for clarification and language comparison purposes. It was apparent that this learning flexibility made learning more comfortable for Zoila and all students.

***Daniela.*** Like many of the other participants, Daniela used her L1 for communicating with her peers during class related items and personal non-class related items. Translating was one of the main reasons for using her L1 during class. She explained that sometimes words that



were unknown to her in English kept her from following a particular discussion or lesson in class. She claimed that when she read, she usually had to translate as well.

During observations it was recorded that Daniela's interaction with her classmates took place using her L1 on several occasions. Sometimes she asked about paragraph assignments and other times she told a classmate that she didn't understand the instructions (Table 11, Code 1, p. 172). At one point, she used her L1 to ask for the translation to English of a Mexican holiday event.

The writing class that Daniela was attending was limited in their interactive activities. Furthermore, although bilingual, the instructor promoted an English-only classroom that usually kept some students who were not too confident about their English from asking questions or giving answers aloud. When asked about her confidence in learning English, Daniela stated that she felt comfortable with what she had already learned. She claimed having difficulty speaking English, but knew that she had improved because she could understand more now. Although Daniela wished more for classes where only English was spoken, she frequently mentioned during interviews that she would still want instructors to be able to clarify in her L1 as needed.

While Daniela claimed that her primary learning practice during her L1 education consisted of listening only, observations showed a different style of learning. Daniela's need to reinforce her learning was apparent with the number of times she used her reference notes and electronic translator (Learning Practices, Table 27, p. 227). Much of her participation in the classroom was guided by the number of times she was asked to participate. Daniela's performance in this class consisted mainly of writing notes for reference or corrections and working on writing assignments. It was recorded that very few times she participated in class.

Throughout the observations Daniela seemed to be a dedicated student. However, a pattern of learning behavior that consisted mainly of writing notes, using the electronic translator, and referring to notes or handouts was noted. This pattern of learning behavior indicated a more conservative style of learning, primarily because the rhythm of the class did not lend itself otherwise. For instance, a typical day for Daniela in this class generally reflected her need to consult with classmates to clarify assignments or check for accuracy on her work. Communication with her classmates usually took place in her L1.

***Manuel.*** Much of the interaction that Manuel engaged in consisted of communication with classmates during class activities. Many times students were asked to get into groups to work on brainstorming, sentence completion, or paragraph development activities. Manuel used his L1 occasionally during activities to discuss the assignments or the instruction of the assignments with classmates (Table 11, Code 1, p. 172).

Although Manuel was usually very attentive during class lectures, he often needed to confirm instructions or assignments with a classmate using his L1. This kind of interaction with his peers was recorded several times during the observations. Given that his instructor was a monolingual native English speaker, Manuel generally had difficulty communicating fluently and accurately with her. While he claimed that having an English-Only class was extremely beneficial for him, he still had to depend on his L1 to ensure comprehension, discuss class activities, and participate in group tasks.

Manuel's motivation to learn was demonstrated during the observations time and again when he gathered together with other classmates during group activities. It was clear that Manuel had difficulty expressing himself in English with the instructor and with his classmates.

However, while many students in the class decided to use their L1 to interact with each other, Manuel was one of the few, if not the only one, to still use English with his classmates. Manuel demonstrated a desire to work, interact, and comprehend English by constantly using English when he read instructions or asked questions to other students within his group.

Although Manuel showed tremendous motivation while working in groups, he hesitated to respond and seemed unsure about the way he needed to respond aloud during class discussions. While his responses may have been correct most of the time, his pronunciation and use of English words were not always accurate. At some point, he seemed intimidated by the instructor every time she got near him to review his work during an exercise. Nonetheless, Manuel seemed to always be ready to take corrections either in his pronunciation or his written work. In this class students were generally very engaged and the dynamics of the class sometimes did not allow Manuel to interact with his peers. Despite his challenge in trying to communicate entirely in English with his instructor and classmates, Manuel always demonstrated a high degree of maturity and responsibility.

***Aurora.*** Aurora's interaction and use of L1 was mainly to communicate with her classmates regarding class assignments. Throughout the observations, it was recorded that Aurora continuously used her L1 to ask questions about how to write words, to share and talk about her notes, and to discuss answers about textbook activities or assignments (Table 11, Code 1, p. 172). Aurora frequently spoke in her L1 with her classmate as they both wrote short paragraphs together on the board. Writing paragraphs on the board was a common activity in this class and required groups of 2 or 3 students to discuss and agree on what and how to write.

Although Aurora participated occasionally in class, she never used her L1 to respond to the instructor or voice her comments aloud. Her only participation came about when requested to do so by the instructor or when responding collectively. She did use her L1 when she participated in group activities. In this class, however, group activities were recorded only two times during the observations. On both of these occasions, Aurora used her L1 to discuss with her classmate what and how to write their sentences.

Her interaction with the instructor was always in English, although she always needed to use her L1 to supplement her questions or comments. Since she usually had difficulty expressing herself in English with the instructor, her interaction with him was often limited. Although she seldom expressed ideas aloud or commented on lesson items during class, she seemed to always be attentive to class explanations and ready to take down notes for her translation tasks.

From the very beginning Aurora was perceived to be a timid student. Because of her inability to communicate fluently and accurately in English, she often remained silent in class waiting for the right moment to consult with her classmate in her L1 about assignments or questions of meaning. She relied on her dictionaries almost every time she had to work on paragraph development or sentence writing. At some point, she would even carry it with her to the board when she and her partner needed to write sentences. She explained that she had two dictionaries, one totally in English and one in English/Spanish. She mentioned that she used the English/Spanish dictionary more in the writing class because of the need to translate constantly. She said that the English dictionary was mostly used in her grammar class. During observations Aurora constantly used her dictionary almost every day observed.

Along with using her dictionaries, Aurora also used written notes and her textbook as resources to continue with her writing assignments. She often referred mostly to her written

notes when in doubt of specific ways to do her work (Learning Practices, Table 27, p. 227).

Having written notes was possible because she was constantly writing more notes as the instructor lectured or provided examples of sentences. As she wrote notes, she also paid close attention to what the instructor explained; this listening process constituted another learning practice that was recorded during the observations.

Given the fact that this writing class was not too dynamic, Aurora spoke only with her classmate in her L1. There were hardly any opportunities (or need) for her to participate in class. Nonetheless, her lack of speaking practice did not seem to hinder her desire to improve her English language skills. Even though she only declared her learning practices in her L1 to be relating to words and using highlighters to mark important terms and concepts (practices that were not regarded as themes because Aurora was the only one using them), Aurora was constantly learning using her L1 to translate. Despite her timid personality, she still displayed a strong will to learn even when it meant translating and doing double work.

**Summary.** Each of the description sections above gives a synopsis of what participants claimed during their interviews about their L1 use and also how they exhibited its use in the classroom. As discussed previously, linguistic preference (e.g., L1 or English use) of each participant during their English writing classes varied depending on past L1 academic experience and instructor teaching style. For instance, some participants, such as Aurora who declared not liking her English classes in Mexico explained that she depended intensely on her L1 for translation purposes during her English writing class in this language institute. Cristina and Daniela similarly depended exclusively on their L1 to write paragraph drafts and later translate.

Instructor teaching style was an observable trait that also influenced the use of participants' L1. For participants who were enrolled in the writing class taught by instructor "A," for example, it was noticeable that students felt comfortable speaking English and making mistakes knowing that they would be corrected by the instructor in English or, if necessary, in their L1. In contrast, participants enrolled in the writing class with instructor "B" did not exhibit much willingness to interact primarily because of the instructor's stricter policy of English-Only classroom. Participants who were enrolled in the writing class with instructor "C" displayed a more lively and engaging attitude, although the instructor was a monolingual native English speaker. This instructor's accessibility and teaching approach provided a comfort zone for all students.

Some participants displayed difficulties with their expressions and contrasting opinions during the interview data collection. For example, during the second interview session Zoila was having trouble using her Spanish to respond to some of the questions asked. Her difficulty seemed to be trying to find the words she wanted to use in Spanish when she was describing the practice of translating. As she expressed her desire to think in English, speaking Spanish in an interview appeared to be getting difficult when she tried to express herself using Spanish words, although Spanish was her L1.

Other participants simply had mixed feelings about using their L1 during their English writing class. Elizabeth, for example, stated during her interview sessions that her L1 was beneficial, but later claimed that using students' L1 was not productive. Her changing opinions were identified as she discussed how she viewed her use of Spanish in two different occasions. Manuel explained that his L1 created mental blocks that usually interfered with his English language learning, although he also claimed that English grammar was best learned using his L1

as a resource. Manuel's uneven perception of his L1 was explained thoroughly during different sections of his interview sessions.

### **Research Question Number Two**

The second question was: *What are the different first language learning practices (e.g., asking questions, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners used during their L1 education?* In trying to answer this question, both participant observations and interviews were the main data collection sources. Interview data were used to find participants' L1 learning practices and observation data were used to find learning practices as they learned academic English.

The whole objective of gathering observation data was to examine student behavior on the use of L1 in general. However, a second objective was to study participants' learning habits in the classroom as they learned academic English. Observations were useful to capture participants' routine classroom behavior that led to understand how their learning practices, or lack thereof, influenced their acquisition of academic English. In addition to recording participant behavior during observations, learning practices and utterances from every participant were recorded each time a classroom was visited.

Interview data were used to find out about participants' learning practices during their L1 education. Although investigating the learning practices in students' L1 included their entire educational experience, some of the responses provided reflected only their middle school, high school, or college level education. The goal of inquiring about learning practices in participants' L1 was to investigate if these practices were also used as they learned academic English and which practice was the most common. Participant responses during interviews indicated a

variety of learning styles that allowed for the organization into different categories of learning practices (See Table 26, p. 226). The observation findings regarding learning practices were also coded and organized similarly (See Table 27, p. 227). A comparison between observation and interview learning practice data provided the analysis to answer research question number two.

Both sets of data from observations and interviews were used to reconcile the different learning approaches from each of the participants and allowed for the categorization of learning styles in order to compare L1 and academic English learning practices. Following each of the data discussion sections below, Tables 26 and 27 display the findings on L1 learning practices and learning practices used during English writing classes from the observation data and the interview data respectively. Each of the coded categories as described in both the interviews and the observations is briefly discussed in the following sections.

**Interview and observational findings.** The first phase of the data collection for answering research question number two consisted of participant interviews. Each participant was asked questions about their L1 learning experience in an attempt to find out what learning practices were used.

Students were asked to participate in two different interview sessions. The first session (See Appendix C2) was planned to take place after the second or third classroom observation. The second session (See Appendix D2) was planned to take place after the sixth or seventh classroom observation. Although this was the plan, some interviews had to be conducted before or after the scheduled time due to students' availability.

While interviews could have been conducted to some extent in English, all of them took place in the students' L1. By doing this, more honesty, openness, and confidence in their



responses was assured. Some participants felt excited about answering questions during the interviews right from the beginning. Other participants felt a little uneasy about answering as if they feared saying something that was not correct. Those who were more eager to talk were allowed to express themselves as much as they wanted to. For those who provided very short answers and seemed to be shy, the same questions were asked using different words or other related questions. Some participants seemed to be nervous during the first interview sessions and this may have impacted some of their initial responses. After a few questions and as soon as they felt more comfortable, however, their responses began to be clearer and longer.

For purposes of finding participant native language education strategies, interview responses were analyzed and coded according to the learning practices described by participants as most useful during their L1 education. After analyzing participant interview responses the following categories were identified: 1) Listening only, 2) Asking questions, 3) Writing notes, 4) Referring to textbook, notes, or handouts, 5) Using electronic translators or Internet, 6) Participating in class, and 7) Translating using dictionaries. The categories of using electronic translators and translating using dictionaries did not necessarily apply to participants' L1 learning practices, unless they described them during their English classes in Mexico. Although all participants had to take English classes in Mexico at some point, only a few participants commented on these categories. The participants who commented on translating categories were Elizabeth, Cristina, and Zoila.

For purposes of this study, the following are brief descriptions of the different learning practices used as referred to in the English writing classes:

- **Listening only** - Refers to participants listening to instructor explanations about a class concept in writing and/or grammar or to questions asked by the instructor to ensure comprehension. The number of recorded times indicate students stopping everything to only listen and pay attention to instructor explanations, corrections, or questions on a given assignment.
- **Asking questions** - Refers to participants' inquiries regarding clarification of meaning in English, translation of words or phrases, or sentence corrections.
- **Writing notes** - Refers to any writing done while instructors lectured, gave answers regarding activity questions, or dictated corrections to some activity.
- **Referring to textbooks, notes, or handouts** - Refers to the use of the class textbook, previously written notes, or handouts given by the instructor. Aside from regular instruction, these items serve as extra learning resources.
- **Using electronic translators or internet** - Refers to the use of technology in lieu of traditional dictionaries for finding definitions or meanings of words. The use of electronic translators was recorded in the classroom under this category, since the use of on-line dictionaries may not have been practical or possible to access in the classroom.
- **Participating in class** - Refers to volunteering to read, respond, or interact in class. Participation under this category had to be exclusively voluntary.

- **Translating using dictionary** - Refers to the exclusive use of traditional dictionaries, whether English/Spanish or English only. Observations recorded under this category did not account for participants using electronic translators.

The second phase of the data collection for answering the second research question was made up of classroom observations. Observations focused on the learning behavior that each participant exhibited. The goal was to look at the learning styles of all participants and determine if the learning styles that were described during interviews were the same. The following section provides a brief description of each of the learning practices identified during participant interviews along with those observed during the course of their English writing classes.

***Listening only.*** During interviews participants described the specific learning practices that they used as they took classes throughout their L1 education. Listening only without having the need to write notes in class was one of the learning practices identified by two participants: Elizabeth and Daniela. Both participants described this practice as common because they identified themselves as not being too enthusiastic about studying or about participating in class. Elizabeth, for example, explained that she would only participate in classes that she enjoyed. She described herself as a very relaxed student whose learning was best achieved through listening only. She claimed that, while in school in Mexico, she did not usually participate in class and she did not usually take notes. Daniela similarly described her experience in Mexico as very passive. She claimed that listening only was her way of learning for as long as she could

remember. During their respective interviews both participants described this practice as follows:

**Table 14:**

***Interview Transcriptions –Listening Only***

Elizabeth	Como estudiante siempre he salido bien, pero no me dedico mucho. Yo sé que si me dedicara un poco más a la escuela tendría mejores resultados, pero yo no soy dedicada a la escuela.	<i>(As a student I've always done well, but I don't apply myself too much. I know that if I put more effort in school, I would have better results, but I'm not too dedicated in school.)</i>
Elizabeth	En México cuando hablaba la maestra yo no apuntaba nada.	<i>No. In Mexico when the instructor spoke I didn't write anything)</i>
Daniela	Yo escuchando porque nunca he sido de las que estudio. Siempre es mas en clase, escucho y escucho.	<i>(I have only listened because I've never been one who studies. It's only listening and listening in class)</i>
Daniela	Me ponía más a poner atención que lo que preguntaba.	<i>(I would pay attention more than ask questions)</i>

Both Elizabeth and Daniela claimed that their academic experience in their L1 education, at least during their middle and high school years, was relatively simple. Elizabeth, for example, explained that she has always obtained good grades. However, she also stated that if she had applied herself more, she would have earned even better grades. Daniela simply described her classes as being easy, with the exception of Mathematics.

Upon gathering classroom observation data, findings indicated that both Elizabeth and Daniela did, in fact, use the learning practice of *listening only* in their English writing classes as well. The following observation recordings show this:

**Table 15:*****Observation Notes and Category 1 – Elizabeth and Daniela***

Elizabeth	The student now turns to see the explanation and to listen	Listening Only (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student listens as the instructor explains the auxiliary verb use to her classmate in the same table	Listening Only (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student is attentive to what the instructor is saying (instructor is standing right in front of her)	Listening Only (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student listens and sees the grammar examples given by the instructor on the board	Listening Only (Code 1)
Elizabeth	The student listens to the instructor as she explains a grammatical concept	Listening Only (Code 1)
Elizabeth	As the instructor speaks about recommendations for learning, the student listens carefully	Listening Only (Code 1)
Daniela	the student becomes more attentive	Listening Only (Code 1)
Daniela	The student is attentive to each of the sentences that are being read by other students	Listening Only (Code 1)

Classroom observation data reflected listening only as a learning practice for Elizabeth and Daniela as both had described during their respective interviews. Observations also revealed that this learning practice was similarly used in the English writing classroom by the rest of the participants. Table 16 below presents observation notes that show how all participants used this learning practice:

**Table 16:*****Observation Notes and Category 1 – All Participants***

Nadia	Instructor begins class explaining present progressive and the student listens attentively	Listening Only (Code 1)
Nadia	The student looks at the examples on the board once again. She looks and listens to the explanation from the instructor	Listening Only (Code 1)
Nadia	The student only listens to the instructor as she explains a grammatical concept	Listening Only (Code 1)
Cristina	The student is very attentive to what the instructor writes on the board without asking questions	Listening Only (Code 1)
Cristina	The student is attentive to the instructor during explanation of whether sentences are compound sentences or not	Listening Only (Code 1)
Zoila	As the instructor lectures, the student listens	Listening Only (Code 1)
Zoila	The student listens and follows along as the instructor reads the answers from the textbook	Listening Only (Code 1)
Manuel	Instructor begins class and student listens carefully	Listening Only (Code 1)
Manuel	Instructor gives responses and student continues to listen without writing	Listening Only (Code 1)
Manuel	The student is paying close attention to the instructor's explanation in English	Listening Only (Code 1)
Aurora	The student is attentive to the questions from the instructor	Listening Only (Code 1)
Aurora	The student listens attentively to the instructor as he edits the first written paragraph	Listening Only (Code 1)

Although instructor teaching style influenced how participants learned, the practice of listening only was found to be a critical learning characteristic, particularly for those who did not intend to participate in class too much. Several times participants displayed a need to stop

everything and simply listen. Manuel, for example, sometimes focused on what the instructor was saying as she gave instructions or asked questions to the class. He admitted not understanding a good portion of what was being said by the instructor, since she was a monolingual native English speaker and her fluency was sometimes difficult for Manuel to follow. Both Cristina and Daniela usually paid close attention to explanations by the instructor. In the writing class where both Cristina and Daniela were enrolled together, the interaction among students in groups was often limited and paying attention was, therefore, a strong source of learning.

***Asking questions.*** One typical learning practice that can be expected in any classroom is inquiring about class content, assignment instructions, or class projects. Asking questions was described as a very common learning practice in their L1 by most of the participants during interviews. Although asking questions seemed to be a natural form of learning, not all participants used this form of learning. Some participants were hesitant to ask questions because of embarrassment, as was the case of Cristina, although she still ended up having to overcome this situation.

During interviews five of the seven participants described asking questions as one of their learning practices. Most of the participants made reference to the Mathematics class for their need of asking questions. Although a specific grade level was not mentioned, most of the learning experiences described in all interviews took place at the middle school or high school level. Elizabeth, Nadia, Cristina, Zoila, and Manuel made the following statements during their respective interviews when asked if they engaged in asking questions as a learning practice:

**Table 17:*****Interview Transcriptions – Asking Questions***

Elizabeth	Depende de la clase. Por ejemplo, matemáticas es mucha participación porque tienes que comparar y decir porque y todo.	<i>Depends on the class. For example, math is a lot of participation because you have to compare and give reasons and all that.</i>
Nadia	Sí. Mas en las que eran teóricas, que no era necesariamente algo práctico.	<i>Yes, and more on the ones that were theoretical, the ones that were not necessarily practical or hands-on.</i>
Cristina	No, casi no. A veces que sí de plano cuando ya no estaba entendiendo nada sí, pero casi no.	<i>No, not really. Sometimes I would when I just did not understand anything, but not really</i>
Zoila	Solo recuerdo la de matemáticas, sí. <u>Sí porque aquí no estoy haciendo nada de preguntas</u> en la primer clase.	<i>I only remember the Mathematics class. Here I'm not asking any questions in my first class.</i>
Manuel	Cuando llevaba matemáticas avanzadas, pues era estarlo repitiendo y preguntando constantemente porque es un poquito más complejo...	<i>When I was taking advanced math, it was a matter of repeating and asking questions constantly because it is a little more complex.</i>

While Elizabeth claimed that she would only pay attention in class to learn in her L1 educational experience, she also explained that she would ask questions only if extremely necessary. She explained that in Mathematics, there was always a need to participate because students had to compare and explain. Cristina also made reference to the Mathematics class and how she had to ask questions even when she was too embarrassed to do so. When asked if she asked a lot of questions in her Mathematics class she stated the following: “Bueno, no tantas pero sí hacía, en frente de la clase no. Le iba a preguntar al maestro directamente (*Well, not that many, only a few, not in front of the class. I would ask the instructor directly.*).”



Aurora and Daniela were two participants that did not describe asking questions as a learning practice in their L1 education. Aurora explained that she did not like to ask questions fearing that other students would make fun of her. She stated that she usually waited until the end of class to ask a classmate about items she didn't understand. Daniela, on the other hand, simply reiterated her desire to simply learn by paying close attention.

During observations, however, it was found that not all participants used the practice of asking questions. Although Daniela and Aurora did not describe asking questions as a learning source in their L1, this learning practice was the highest rated during interviews. In spite of the fact the most participants described asking questions as a significant way of learning in their L1, especially since many made reference to Mathematics classes, observation data showed that only Elizabeth, Zoila, Daniela, and Manuel asked questions in their English writing class. Table 18 below shows the notes from the observations that reflect the learning practice of asking questions of these participants:

**Table 18:**

***Observation Notes and Category 2 – Elizabeth, Zoila, Daniela, and Manuel***

Elizabeth	The student asks why “and” is preceded by a comma in a series of items in a sentence	Asking Questions (Code 2)
Zoila	The student asks a question in English about a sentence correction, “Can I use semicolon...?”	Asking Questions (Code 2)
Daniela	The student asks the instructor about the translation of “bailestípicos” <u>in English</u> to include in her paragraph about Mexico	Asking Questions (Code 2)

Manuel	Student asks the instructor a question in English, “topic sentence?”	Asking Questions (Code 2)
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Data collection during classroom observations showed that although asking questions was relatively common in Mexico, not all participants used this practice in their English classes. Aurora and Daniela, for example, explained that they did not ask questions during their L1 education. As both participants took their English writing class, Aurora still did not ask any questions while Daniela asked a question only once during the course of the observations.

Elizabeth, Zoila, and Manuel declared during their interviews that asking questions was part of their learning in their L1. Findings demonstrated that for these three participants the practice of asking questions was useful for their English writing class as it was for their L1 classes.

**Writing notes.** The practice of writing notes was another category that was described by most participants as useful during their L1 education. Writing notes referred to any writing done while instructors lectured, gave responses or corrections, or dictated words or phrases. Almost all participants described the need to write very few to a good amount of notes in their classes during their L1 education. Under this category, Nadia, Cristina, Zoila, and Manuel described the process of writing notes as an essential component in specific classes in Mexico. Nadia and Zoila, for example, made reference to their engineering classes as their primary reason for writing notes, although Nadia referred to college level classes and Zoila referred to high school level classes. Both mentioned that it was critical for them to write notes in these classes because of the formulas that needed to be learned and/or memorized.

Although Manuel was also a college graduate in the field of engineering, he did not make any mention of his engineering classes as a primary reason for note writing. He simply claimed that writing notes was another learning practice that was needed, although he did not make reference to any particular course. His need to write notes seemed to be for all his college level classes. The need to write notes was the same for Cristina, although she described this learning practice at the high school level. Cristina described herself as a very shy student who would ask questions after class rather than during class. Cristina talked about her need to write notes, since she was often hesitant to ask questions aloud. Taking notes worked better for her. Writing notes was simply another learning practice that she used for class content that she described as “interesting.” Table 19 shows statements made from all four participants during their respective interviews regarding note writing.

**Table 19:*****Interview Transcriptions – Writing Notes***

Nadia	Preguntaba y necesitaba hacer muchas notas, pero más que nada era práctica porque era ingeniería. Entonces eran muchos números y fórmulas. Memorizar y practicar.	<i>I used to ask and write a lot of notes, but more than anything, it was more practice because it was engineering</i>
Zoila	Bueno tuve mucha matemática por ser ingeniero en electrónica y es lo que más me acuerdo. Entonces siempre utilizamos formulas, lo que hacía era apuntar la formula...Eso era lo que me ayudaba.	<i>Well, I had a lot of math for being an electronic engineer and that's what I remember the most. We always used formulas...That would help me a lot.</i>
Manuel	Específicamente en la universidad, la técnica que usaba ahí era libros de texto y tomar apuntes...la técnica <u>era textos, tomar apuntes y específicamente ya</u>	<i>Specifically in the university, the techniques that I used were textbooks and taking notes...the techniques were textbooks and taking notes.</i>

	particularizando materias práctica, práctica, práctica, práctica.	<i>We had to practice, practice, and practice.</i>
Cristina	Pues, preguntar casi no porque si soy algo tímida, pero haciendo apuntes cuando era algo así interesante, lo anotaba yo.	<i>Well, asking questions not really because I'm somewhat shy, but I would write notes when there was something interesting. I would write it</i>

It seemed like writing notes would be a very common learning practice for all participants. However, Elizabeth, Daniela, and Aurora did not comment on their need to write notes as part of their learning practices. Elizabeth claimed to be more attentive to picking up lecture material by paying close attention only. During her interviews she gave the impression that her unwillingness to participate in some of her classes was the result of not too interesting classes. As a result, writing was not a need for her as long as she could learn by listening only, as she expressed. Daniela similarly claimed to be a student who would rather pay attention to learn. Daniela like Elizabeth described herself as student who did not always apply herself to her studies and, according to her, she had this habit since she could remember. During her interview, Daniela did not mention writing notes as a need for her to learn. Aurora did not mention any need to write notes either. Aurora's main learning focus was more on relating elements or images to concepts needed to be learned. She explained that she was more inclined to the practice of memorizing and associating visuals in order to remember what she needed to know for certain classes. Thus, writing notes was not mentioned.

During observations, however, there was a variation in the number of instances where participants used this learning practice in their English writing classes. For example, it was recorded during observations that Nadia actually wrote notes only one time as opposed to Zoila

who wrote notes up to 8 times. For both Cristina and Manuel it was recorded that they wrote notes during their English writing class only 2 times each.

Nadia, Cristina, Zoila, and Manuel were the 4 participants who claimed writing notes as a learning practice in Mexico. In contrast, Elizabeth, Daniela, and Aurora did not describe writing notes as part of their L1 learning. All three participants, however, did engage in note writing in their respective English writing classes. Observations indicated that Daniela had the highest number of instances with 6, Elizabeth had 5, and Aurora wrote notes only once. While only 4 participants claimed to have used note writing as a learning practice during their L1 education, observational findings indicated that all seven participants used note writing as a technique for learning academic English.

***Reference to textbooks, notes, or handouts.*** Another learning practice that was brought up in the interviews was the process of referring to sources that supplemented class lectures, such as notes, handouts, or the class textbook. Manuel was the only participant who made reference to his textbooks and other sources as part of his learning during his L1 education. Given his engineering degree, he explained that he used his class textbooks as an important resource in addition to his note writing. During his interview he described this learning practice with the statement below:

Específicamente en la Universidad, la técnica que usaba ahí era libros de texto y tomar apuntes.

*Specifically in the university, the techniques that I used were textbooks and taking notes.*

Manuel explained that he also required extensive practice in his university classes when he used his textbook. Interestingly, Nadia, whose degree was also in engineering, also stated her need to practice as part of her learning. Both participants explained this during their respective interviews as follows:

**Table 20:**

***Interview Transcriptions – Manuel and Nadia***

Manuel	Académicamente, estábamos obligados a hacer prácticas de las materias, pero la técnica era textos, tomar apuntes y específicamente ya particularizando materias práctica, práctica, práctica, práctica.	<i>Academically, we were required to practice our course material, but the techniques were textbooks and taking notes. We had to practice, practice, and practice.</i>
Nadia	...más que nada era práctica porque era ingeniería. .	<i>...more than anything, it was more practice because it was engineering.</i>

Only Manuel and Nadia made such references regarding their L1 learning. Both participants emphasized the need to practice on their assignments during their engineering courses. While the nature of these courses or what was expected of them was not disclosed, it made sense that two students with a similar academic background had the same opinion of the need to practice. Coincidentally, they were the only ones with a civil engineering degree. It seemed obvious that referring to sources such as the textbook, written notes, or class handouts was a logical learning practice for students in the engineering field.

While Manuel was the only participant during interviews who expressed the need to refer to textbooks and other resources as his way of learning during his L1 education, it was recorded

during observations that he referred to his written notes only once in his English class. During observations it was also recorded that along with Manuel, Zoila, Daniela, and Aurora had to refer to textbooks, written notes, or handouts, although they did not mentioned it as a learning technique during their L1 education. The following observation notes show this:

**Table 21:**

***Observation Notes and Category 4 – Zoila, Daniela, Manuel, and Aurora***

Manuel	The students are asked to write a topic sentences with the statements given; <u>the participant goes back and forth to his notes</u>	Reference (Code 4)
Zoila	The participant continues to work on her assignment; she refers to the handout given by the instructor	Reference (Code 4)
Zoila	She refers to her notes and the handout that the instructor gave her	Reference (Code 4)
Daniela	The participant reviews previous pages from the textbook seemingly to understand the assignment	Reference (Code 4)
Daniela	The participant is referring to her textbook periodically as she writes	Reference (Code 4)
Aurora	The participant reviews previous pages from the textbook to find answers	Reference (Code 4)
Aurora	The participant reviews her notes periodically	Reference (Code 4)

It was recorded that Zoila used the reference learning practice 2 times, Aurora used it 4 times, and Daniela used it 7 times. None of these three participants declared or described the

need to refer to any sources as a learning practice during their L1 education. Therefore, the learning practice of referring to textbooks, notes, and/or handouts appeared to be a necessary practice for 4 out of the seven participants as they learned academic English.

***Electronic translator or internet.*** The use of electronic translators or the internet as a source for translation was not described during interviews as a main learning practice for L1 education, although all participants had to take English classes in Mexico. Elizabeth, Nadia, Cristina, Zoila, Daniela, Manuel, and Aurora described English classes during their L1 education as a requirement, mainly during middle school or high school. Almost all participants, however, described their English classes in Mexico as monotonous and relatively unproductive.

Although some of the descriptions of the English classes in Mexico emphasized translations, there were only two participants observed who used electronic translators during their English classes. The two participants were Elizabeth and Daniela. It was recorded that Elizabeth used an electronic translator only once. Daniela, on the other hand, used an electronic translator 7 times throughout the observation period. Observations revealed that Daniela relied heavily on her translator. She averaged almost one use of the translator for every class observation that took place, considering that sometimes the use of the translator was recorded up to three times in one class. The following notes from Daniela's observations reflect this:

**Table 22:**

***Observation Notes and Category 5 – Electronic Translator***

Daniela	The participant now takes out an electronic translator ***	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
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Daniela	As the participant reads the screen, she <u>uses the electronic translator</u>	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The participant has an electronic translator on her desk and is using it very continuously	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The participant has <u>an electronic translator</u> right in front of her to work on the assignment	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The participant continues to use her <u>translator</u> ; it seems she needs a lot of assistance perhaps in <u>vocabulary, spelling, or work meaning</u>	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The class is asked to work on an activity from the textbook; <u>the participant immediately uses her electronic translator</u>	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	As the participant thinks about what to write on the board, <u>she uses her electronic translator</u>	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The participant <u>has her electronic translator</u> on the board rail for quick access	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The participant <u>uses her electronic translator</u> once more	Electronic Translator (Code 5)
Daniela	The participant <u>uses her electronic translator</u> as she works on an activity from her textbook	Electronic Translator (Code 5)

Daniela expressed during her interview and exhibited during the observations a strong need to rely on the electronic translator for almost every assignment, activity, or explanation. In the writing class where Daniela was enrolled, students often went to the board to write sentences. Daniela used her electronic translator so much that she would carry it with her to the board occasionally. While no other participant, except Elizabeth, was observed using electronic

translators during their English writing classes, Daniela seemed to benefit extensively from this learning practice. It was observed that Elizabeth only used an electronic translator one time.

Some participants stated that they relied on electronic translators and constantly used them throughout their writing classes. During interviews it was found that more than one participant preferred using either electronic translators or internet dictionaries, although they possessed English/Spanish or English dictionaries. Manuel was an example of this, although his description of on-line dictionary use was more for outside of class assignments. However, despite his preference for electronic dictionaries on-line, it was recorded during observations that a few times he used his English/Spanish dictionary very briefly to look up the translation of words. Findings from the observations suggested that technology was an important source for learning in the writing classes, since Daniela and Elizabeth relied on it routinely. In addition to Daniela, Elizabeth was the only other participant who used an electronic translator during her English writing classes.

***Participate in class.*** Another category of L1 learning practices discussed during interviews was the participation during classes. Although participation in class theoretically can range from students asking questions to writing notes and sharing with classmates, for purposes of coding interview learning practices in this study, participation was restricted to students volunteering to read aloud, respond to questions aloud, or engage in class discussion. Elizabeth was the only participant who described participation in class as one of her L1 learning practices (See Table 26, pg. 226). When asked if she participated in her classes in Mexico she explicitly stated that she only participated in classes that she liked.

For some students class participation may not have been seen as a vital practice in courses such as Mathematics or engineering, since most participants talked about other ways of learning. However, when asked about asking questions in class, Elizabeth related the practice of asking questions to participation. Although she stated that she participated only in classes that she liked, she did emphasize the challenges of the Mathematics classes where she explained that students needed to compare, explain, etc. which to her constituted participation.

Some participants stated during interviews that participating in class during their L1 education was not too common or enjoyable. A significant reason for not participating in class was students being shy or fearing other students making fun of them, as was the case of Aurora and Cristina. Aurora explained during her interviews that she always felt uncomfortable asking questions or participating in her L1 classes, since other students in her class generally made fun of students asking questions during class. This sense of intimidation kept her from participating. Cristina, on the other hand, simply stated that she was too shy to ask questions or participate in front of the whole class while in Mexico.

While the interview findings revealed that only Elizabeth participated in her L1 classes, the observation data showed that all participants used the practice of class participation in their English writing class. The observation findings showed that most participants were capable of not only responding or voluntarily expressing thoughts or opinions aloud in class, but they did so in English. Elizabeth, Nadia, and Zoila were the participants with the highest number of instances of class participation with 8 times each. Daniela participated in class 4 times, Manuel and Aurora participated 3 times, and Cristina participated only one time. The following are some examples of observation notes for all participants under this category:

**Table 23:*****Observation Notes and Category 6 – All Participants***

Elizabeth	The participant says a sentence aloud and the instructor asks if there is a need to have a comma. She responds that it doesn't need a coma because it is a simple sentence	Participate in Class (Code 6)
Nadia	The instructor asks for parts of speech of the sentence and the participant responds enthusiastically.	Participate in Class (Code 6)
Cristina	The instructor asks if a sentence is complex or simple; the participant responds aloud "complex"	Participate in Class (Code 6)
Zoila	The participant voices out that the sentences being read is incorrect; she says "it's a fragment"	Participate in Class (Code 6)
Daniela	The participant responds aloud to one of the questions from the instructor	Participate in Class (Code 6)
Manuel	Participant continues to answer in English to formulate a topic	Participate in Class (Code 6)
Aurora	The participant answers aloud "some people say yes, some people say no," this is in English	Participate in Class (Code 6)

Although class participation was difficult for some students because of their inability to express themselves correctly in English or because of their seemingly low self-esteem, participants were able to engage quite frequently in this learning practice. While observations showed that Aurora participated in class up to 3 times, she exhibited more intimidation and was usually hesitant to use English. Although Cristina and Aurora expressed unwillingness to

participate during their L1 education, they both participated in their English writing classes.

Based on the observation data, class participation was an important learning practice in which all participants engaged in one way or another.

***Translating using dictionaries.*** Although the practice of translating using dictionaries was not a needed strategy in students' regular academic L1 courses, all participants still used this learning practice since they all took English classes in Mexico. During their English classes they all occasionally had the need to use their dictionary for translating. All participants explained that English classes were required at the middle school, high school, or university level. However, Elizabeth, Cristina, and Zoila explained that during their English classes in Mexico they were sometimes required to translate extensively. While these 3 participants expressed a need to use their dictionaries during their English classes for translating, none mentioned the use of an electronic translator.

During observations all participants, except Daniela, used their dictionaries at some point during their English writing classes. The following are some of the observation notes that reflect participants' use of dictionaries for translating:

**Table 24:**

***Observation Notes and Category 7 – All Participants***

Elizabeth	The participant <u>starts using her dictionary</u>	Using Dictionary (Code 7)
Nadia	The participant has a <u>dictionary with one hand holding a page in</u> it as she writes notes while the instructor lectures	Using Dictionary (Code 7)

Cristina	The participant now refers to the Spanish/English dictionary for reference	Using Dictionary (Code 7)
Zoila	The participant suddenly gets her dictionary out and starts looking for words	Using Dictionary (Code 7)
Manuel	Participant turns around and gets two dictionaries (one is an English dictionary and the other is an English/Spanish dictionary) to do part of their assignment	Using Dictionary (Code 7)
Aurora	The participant just got out her dictionary and is now looking for words	Using Dictionary (Code 7)

Daniela's need for translating was fulfilled using her electronic translator which was previously identified as a separate learning practice category (Table 27, Code 5, pg. 227). Since she also had a strong need to translate unknown words just like all other participants, she relied heavily on her electronic translator and was never seen with a traditional dictionary.

The use of traditional dictionaries was found to be an important resource for all participants with the exception of Daniela. All other participants used dictionaries at least once in their English writing classes. From the observations, Cristina was the highest user of dictionaries with 6 instances, while Nadia and Aurora were recorded to have used their dictionaries 3 times each. Manuel used a dictionary twice and Elizabeth and Zoila each used it only once.

**Interview and observational data summary.** The first phase of data collection consisted of interview questions. Interview responses were an important source of data to answer the second research question. Participants' responses provided insight of how learning in

participants' own language was structured in the minds of each student when the goal was academic achievement. Based on interview responses, learning practices used when there was no language barrier allowed for more flexibility throughout students' L1 education. For example, participants like Elizabeth and Daniela could afford to only listen attentively and not focus too much on a language constraints. In contrast, learning in a second language meant applying other measures to learn (e.g. using dictionaries or electronic translators) while at the same time trying to accomplish course objectives.

In order to investigate students' learning practices in their L1 education, questions that directly inquired about their learning style were used. For example, one question was: *What learning strategies did you use in school in Mexico?* The range of responses led to other follow-up questions such as: *In a class like anatomy, for example, how did you memorize things? Is this a strategy that you've always used or is it something recent?* The intention was to have participants elaborate as much as possible on responses that could potentially lead to further questions. Another question used was: *When you were at school in Mexico, did you ask a lot of questions in class?* For this question, most participants provided detailed responses as to whether they engaged in class questioning or not and the reasons for doing so. These types of questions allowed for a variety of responses that led to the creation of individual learning practice categories.

Interview questions targeted the academic experience in Mexico, although a few responses made indirect reference to their English writing class. The ultimate objective of this first phase of data collection was to obtain sufficient responses to learning practices used in Mexico during interviews so that these data could be later compared to what was observed in the classrooms.

Different learning practices were described by each participant based on the courses they took. Depending on the type of education achieved in their L1 for every adequate formal learner (e.g. high school or university), participants explained how each viewed their own individual learning processes. Most participants, for example, made reference to Mathematics and what they did to learn in that class. The Mathematics classes were emphasized primarily by Nadia, Zoila, and Manuel, since their L1 academic background was engineering.

From the 7 categories of learning practices described by all participants during interviews, the practice of asking questions was the one most commonly identified by almost all participants with the exception of Daniela and Aurora. These two participants described themselves as embarrassed or fearful of asking questions aloud in class and would rather wait until classes ended to raise questions or simply asked a classmate.

Another popular learning practice described was writing notes. Under this category, Nadia, Cristina, Zoila, and Manuel identified note writing as a significant source of learning in their L1. In contrast, Elizabeth, Daniela, and Aurora did not mention note writing as a major source of learning. Elizabeth and Aurora concentrated on other learning practices, while Daniela described listening as the only learning practice. The remaining learning practice categories were only identified one or two times by different participants.

The second phase of the data collection for answering the second research question consisted of classroom observations. Classroom observations concentrated on the learning behavior of each participant. The objective was to examine individual learning styles that could be matched with the learning styles identified during interviews. While the normal L1 educational experience of each individual participant may have allowed for different learning practices, learning academic English created an extra effort in the learning process, such as



having to rely on dictionaries or electronic translators. From the observations it was perceived that participants did not only tackle the language barrier, but also the class content that was not always familiar or easy to learn. Observational data on learning practices in their English writing classes provided a different perspective on how participants engaged in their learning tasks, which usually differed from the learning practices used during their L1 education.

Gathering interview data on L1 learning practices provided individual participant perspectives on how each student learned best. However, from the observations it was perceived that learning class content in a second language was strictly not the same as learning in the first language. Learning practices in a second language appeared to be more complex for participants in terms of trying to align language learning goals and course instruction objectives. While participants seemed to subconsciously engage in different learning practices than those described on their interviews, they all seemed to have the same learning goals in their English writing classes.

Native language learning practices varied depending on participant education experience and courses taken. For instance, Nadia claimed that she took frequent notes of important formulas during her L1 education, since many of her courses at the university level were in engineering and required reference to many of these formulas. In the same way and in addition to writing notes, Cristina claimed that she needed to ask questions. During observations, however, it was found that some of these practices were either reinforced or substituted by others. For example, Elizabeth claimed during interviews that she did not have a need to write notes during her L1 education, but observations showed that she often asked questions in her English writing class. Although Elizabeth described herself to be a passive student with little need to engage in class, the observation data indicated that she engaged in other learning

practices. While she claimed that she would only pay close attention and participate in class (only if the class was interesting enough), the findings revealed that she not only asked questions, but also wrote notes, used an electronic translator, used a dictionary, and participated extensively in class. Interestingly and in contrast to her interview claims, Elizabeth's highest scores came on the participation in class with 8 observed occurrences.

Another interesting observation finding was the learning practices that Zoila performed while learning academic English. Zoila's claims during the interview sessions indicated that she only engaged in asking questions and writing notes during her L1 education experience. However, upon gathering observation data, it was found that in her English writing class she used almost all of the learning practices described by participants during the interviews. Although she mentioned that she only asked questions in her Math classes in Mexico, she also stated that she usually did not ask any questions in her English writing class. The following statements reflect her claims:

Solo recuerdo la de matemáticas, sí. Sí porque aquí no estoy  
haciendo nada de preguntas en la primer clase.

*I only remember the Math class. Here I'm not asking any  
questions in my first class.*

Although Zoila mentioned that she did not ask questions in her English writing class, observation data showed that she asked questions on three different occasions. The statements in Table 25 show the observation notes that reflect this.

**Table 25:*****Observation Notes and Category 2 – Zoila***

Zoila	The student asks a question in English, referring to another sentence than the one in question	Asking Questions (Code 2)
Zoila	The student asks a question in English about a sentence correction, “Can I use semicolon...?”	Asking Questions (Code 2)
Zoila	The student <u>asks in English</u> the meaning of the word “fate,” she gets a response from the instructor	Asking Questions (Code 2)

Although Zoila did not mention anything about participating in her classes in Mexico, she was one of the highest in her participation numbers totaling 8 times. For Zoila, the learning practices of participating in class and note writing were the two highest categories observed in her English writing class. Zoila’s other learning practices included listening, asking questions, referring to textbooks or notes, and translating using dictionaries.

In the same way, Manuel claimed writing notes as a learning practice in his L1 education, along with asking questions and referring to his textbook. Throughout the observations it was noted that on several occasions he also engaged in listening exclusively, participated in class, and translated using his dictionaries. Although Manuel referred to only 3 learning practices used in Mexico, he was observed using 3 additional learning practice categories.

Participant responses ranged from one to four learning practices having been used during their education in Mexico. These data were obtained directly from the interviews. Although

each participant's description of their learning practices helped organize the data on Table 26 below, exclusive data from interviews were not sufficient to answer the second research question entirely. Therefore, classroom observation data concentrating on the learning behavior of every participant were also used. The intention was to use classroom observations and then combine observational data with the interview data to determine what learning practices were used in their L1 education and also to determine what learning practice was the most common for adequate formal schooled students as they learned academic English. Table 26 below shows the interview responses from participants.

**Table 26:*****Categorization of L1 Learning Practices Based on Interviews***

Name of Participant	Listening or Paying Attention	Asking Questions	Writing Notes	Reference to Textbook, Notes, or Handouts	Electronic Translator or Internet	Participate in class	Translating using Dictionary
	(Code 1)	(Code 2)	(Code3)	(Code 4)	(Code 5)	(Code 6)	(Code 7)
Elizabeth	√	√				√	√
Nadia		√	√				
Cristina		√	√				√
Zoila		√	√				√
Daniela	√						
Manuel		√	√	√			
Aurora							

After organizing data in Table 26, observations were analyzed and coded using the categories from the interview data. This time, however, the findings showed that students used additional learning practices in the English writing classes than the ones that were used during their L1 education. Table 27 below shows how the findings were organized using the same

format as Table 26 by marking the observation data over the interview data. The learning practices described by participants during interviews are identified in a red checkmark. Next to each checkmark is a number that identifies the instances where that particular learning practice was used and recorded during classroom observations. Other numbers that don't have a red checkmark represent learning practices that were recorded from each participant during observations, but were not claimed as having been used in participants' L1 education. Table 27, therefore, shows both data sets that reflect the comparison of learning practices used in participants' L1 education and in the English writing classes.

**Table 27:***Comparison of Learning Practices Taken from Interview and Observational Data*

Name of Participant	Listening or Paying Attention	Asking Questions	Writing Notes	Reference to Textbook, Notes, or Handouts	Electronic Translator or Internet	Participate in class	Translating Using Dictionary
	(Code 1)	(Code 2)	(Code3)	(Code4)	(Code5)	(Code6)	(Code 7)
Elizabeth	✓ 4	✓ 2	5		1	✓ 8	✓ 1
Nadia	3	✓	✓ 1			8	3
Cristina	2	✓	✓ 2			1	✓ 6
Zoila	4	✓ 3	✓ 8	2		8	✓ 1
Daniela	✓ 2	1	6	7	7	4	
Manuel	3	✓ 1	✓ 2	✓ 1		3	2
Aurora	2		1	4		3	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>16</b>

Whether L1 learning practices were strengthened or omitted during the English writing classes, categorized observational data helped compare differences and similarities. Each of the learning practices described during interviews and observations were analyzed, organized and coded (Creswell, 2009). As can be seen from Tables 26 and 27, the most common learning

practices described on the interviews were *asking questions* and *writing notes*. During the interviews, some participants described in full detail how and why they engaged in each learning practice. Observational data showed if the learning practices described during interviews were also used while learning academic English. The data collected and displayed on both tables provided the data to answer the second research question.

**Learning practices by individual participant.** The previous sections presented the strategies of the entire group of participants discussed and organized by each of the learning practices exclusively. There were, however, individual variations that were discovered from the learning preferences of each participant. In the following section, a description is presented organized and discussed by individual participant on their learning practices taken from observations and explained during interviews. Other details from both data sets that may not have been coded provide different aspects of participant thoughts regarding their learning styles both in their L1 and in their English classes.

***Elizabeth.*** During the interview, Elizabeth described four learning practices that were eventually confirmed with observational data. These learning practices were listening, asking questions, participating in class, and translating.

The first learning practice discussed was listening closely to lectures. Elizabeth stated that in Mexico she simply paid attention to her instructors and listened very carefully to all lessons. She explained that when the teachers lectured, she never wrote anything. She claimed that listening was important because she was not too dedicated in her studies. Thus, it made it more convenient to listen and understand the lessons the first time they were given rather than

having to go back and review written notes. According to her, she hardly asked questions in her classes.

As far as using this learning practice in her ESL courses, she claimed that she continued to learn mostly by listening only. Observations in this participant's writing class, however, showed the complete opposite. She frequently participated and volunteered answers during class discussions or group activities. An important element that she discussed during an interview was that she seldom participated in classes. She claimed that the only way she would participate in classes was if she really liked or enjoyed the class. Despite her claims of not participating, it was observed that when the instructor asked questions to the entire class, Elizabeth seemed to be always ready with an answer. Furthermore, contrary to her claims about listening only as a learning practice, she wrote down notes several times as the instructor lectured.

The second learning practice discussed during interviews was asking questions. Elizabeth claimed that during her education in Mexico she asked questions depending on the class. In asking questions, she specifically made reference to her Mathematics class. The following quote from her interviews illustrates her response:

Depende de la clase. Por ejemplo, matemáticas es mucha participación porque tienes que comparar y decir porque y todo.

*It depends on the class. For example, math is a lot of participation because you have to compare and give reasons and all that.*

While she claimed that she seldom asked questions, it was found during observations that she asked questions aloud a couple of times. One time she inquired about the punctuation of a

sentence being discussed collectively. On another occasion she asked about the correct form of writing a sentence as they worked on sentence fragments. Although she asserted that she hardly asked any questions during her L1 education experience, she did engage in the practice of asking questions in her English writing class.

The third learning practice described by Elizabeth was participating in class. What Elizabeth claimed during the interviews as participating in class was confirmed extensively during observations. It was recorded that she participated continuously in almost all visits to the classroom. Her participation was done in different ways and for several reasons. For example, several times she responded to instructor questions aloud upon demand. The instructor usually called on students willing to give answers to questions about assignments. She also participated collectively when other students together with her wanted to participate. Collective participation included times when she used her L1 to support a response given by a classmate who had been inadvertently ignored by the instructor. She further participated individually when she saw that no one knew the answers to questions posed by the instructor.

The fourth learning practice that was discussed during the interview was translating, which is one of the ways this participant used her L1. Translating was categorized as a learning practice because it helped this participant comprehend and learn. As discussed previously, Elizabeth claimed that she needed to translate almost everything. It was never recorded during observations that Elizabeth opened a dictionary in class. When asked about using dictionaries she claimed that she did have an English/Spanish dictionary (which she's had since 8<sup>th</sup> grade), but she never used it because she didn't like using it. During the interviews, she explained that she had taken English classes during her middle school and high school years in Mexico. She claimed that in some of the English classes that she took in Mexico, much of the instruction had



to do with translating and learning what words meant and this required an extensive use of the dictionary. This appeared to be the reason why she no longer liked to use the dictionary.

Elizabeth claimed that she preferred using the internet to translate or find meanings of words. However, unless she could access the internet in her cellular phone or she had an electronic translator in class, which she never made reference to, never was Elizabeth seen opening any dictionary. She may have referred to the internet translators when she was in the computer lab writing a paragraph for the writing class. The writing instructors frequently took their classes to the computer lab to work on paragraph development or essay writing assignments. Working on her assignments directly in a computer with internet access may have made it easier for her to rely on the internet for her meaning and translation needs.

*Nadia.* Two L1 learning practices that Nadia described during her interviews were asking questions and writing notes. When asked about her L1 education experience, Nadia explained that she needed to ask questions and write notes extensively, making reference to her engineering courses. She described her need to learn and memorize numbers and formulas. She also explained that while asking questions and writing extensive notes were fundamental learning practices, she also needed to practice much of the engineering content.

As far as applying those learning practices in her English writing course, she explained that she usually took notes and wrote in a diary at the instructor's request. She stated that writing in a diary was a very good technique that forced students to practice their writing. She further explained that students usually came to an English language program to learn to speak English more than to write. However, she stressed that if students didn't write well, maybe they wouldn't speak well either.

In spite of the L1 learning practices that Nadia described (e.g. asking questions and writing notes), it was recorded during observations that there were more instances where she listened attentively and participated in class. For the purposes of the observations, listening referred to dropping everything and paying close attention to either explanations or corrections given by the instructor. Although she did not list class participation as one used during her L1 education, she fully participated in her English class. A total of eight times were recorded throughout the observational period where Nadia participated. Nadia's numbers were one of the overall highest in this category of learning practices (See Table 27, p. 227).

Participation included mainly responding to questions asked by the instructor directed to the entire class. In some observation notes it was recorded that she responded enthusiastically to questions asked to the whole class, while in another time she had some pronunciation difficulty despite her accurate responses. Although on several occasions she did have some problems pronouncing some of the words she used to respond, overall she displayed a sense of confidence during each of the observations. The observation excerpts on Table 28 below illustrate this.

**Table 28:**

***Observation Notes and Category 6 – Nadia***

Nadia	The instructor asks, "What kind of a sentence is that?" The student along with others respond, "compound sentence"	Participation (Code 6)
Nadia	After reading, the student looks at the board as the instructor writes a sample sentence and explains. The instructor asks for parts of speech of the sentence and the student responds enthusiastically.	Participation (Code 6)
Nadia	the participant feels confident in	Participation (Code 6)

	responding aloud to most of the questions by the instructor ***	
Nadia	The participant is one of the few students who responds in English aloud to grammar questions about sentences structure	Participation (Code 6)

Her participation consisted mainly in answering questions posed by the instructor to the entire class. She was ready to read when asked to do so or provide any answers from any given assignment being discussed during class. The number of times she engaged in class participation clearly outnumbered all other learning practices in the writing class. She claimed that participating was important because if you didn't participate, then you didn't ask questions and you didn't know if you really learned. She considered herself to be a participative student.

Nadia was also asked what she thought was more helpful, seeing or hearing during her English language writing class instruction. She stated that she preferred seeing because when people spoke sometimes she was not able to distinguish some of the words that were spoken, as opposed to seeing examples of what was being said. She explained that it was always easier for her to understand any corrections or explanations when plenty of examples were given on the board.

When asked during the interview sessions about how she felt about learning English, Nadia claimed that she felt confident in her capabilities to learn. She made reference to her L1 education explaining that, because of her L1 education, she already possessed a good academic foundation that allowed her to anticipate what her strengths and weaknesses were and how she could handle them. For this reason, she claimed that it was becoming less difficult for her to learn academic English.

*Cristina.* During her interview Cristina discussed the importance of her L1 through the use of her English/Spanish dictionary. The use of the Spanish/English dictionary was recorded several times during the observations. Cristina described the following as her L1 learning practices: 1) Asking questions, 2) Writing notes, and 3) Using her English/Spanish dictionary (when she took her English classes in Mexico). Although she described asking questions as part of her learning practice while studying in Mexico, she explained that she usually asked questions after class because she was often too embarrassed to ask questions during class. It seemed like her being shy kept her from asking questions in her English writing class as well.

While writing notes was another learning practice described from her L1 education, it was recorded only two times during observations that Cristina wrote notes in her English writing class. The first time was when she wrote notes and sample sentences that the instructor wrote on the board. The second time was during an explanation about how to structure and organize sentences in paragraphs. For Cristina, writing notes was a matter of opportunity because most of the time students were either working in the computer lab or going over homework assignments, generally from the textbook.

During her writing process, Cristina explained that she usually had to use her Spanish/English dictionary quite extensively when words that she knew how to say were difficult to spell or remember the meaning of in English. She constantly consulted her dictionary while writing a paragraph or working on an activity from the textbook. She further explained that the reason she used a Spanish/English dictionary was to translate unknown words in English to Spanish and be able to use synonyms in English once she knew the meaning in Spanish. The use of the dictionary was recorded many times in observations.

Aside from the learning practices that she described in her interviews, it was also recorded in observations that Cristina constantly proofread her work. This was a very interesting observation because she was the only participant who actually went back to review what she had written every time she wrote something new to her paragraphs. The practice of proofreading was not part of the coded learning practices because it was not mentioned as a strategy during any participant L1 education. Throughout the entire observation data collection, no participant proofread his/her work as Cristina did.

She was also asked about her preference for either seeing or hearing what she was taught. She explained that she would rather have examples to see because that way she had the opportunity to write notes and keep them for future reference. Given her dislike of participating in class aloud, Cristina appeared to benefit more from written examples that would give her a more concrete idea of each lesson.

**Zoila.** Two learning practices that Zoila described as common during her L1 education were *asking questions* and *writing notes*. She made reference to her Math classes and she talked about all the formulas that she had to write in her notes. Although Zoila described these two fundamental learning practices and further explained that writing notes was one that she also used in her English writing class, it was recorded during observations that she actively engaged in other learning practices, such as listening, using notes or handouts as reference, participating in class, and using a dictionary for translating words.

Given the dynamics of the writing class where Zoila was enrolled, it was clear that she was always busy writing, working with peers, or listening to lectures. During observations it was recorded that Zoila listened closely to instructor lectures, instructions for assignments, and

recommendations on how to work on specific tasks. Yet on two other occasions her use of handouts and her written notes as reference guides were also recorded. Although she mentioned that she occasionally relied on her dictionary in her writing class, it was recorded only one time that she referred to her English/Spanish dictionary. The highest number of learning practices was Zoila's participation in class. Her participation consisted of requests by the instructor for her to read or give an answer, as well as her voluntary desire to provide answers aloud or correct other students' work.

***Daniela.*** Daniela described her learning practices in her L1 education as listening or paying attention exclusively. She did not consider herself a participative student. She explained that in Mexico she would pay more attention rather than ask questions. In her English writing class she claimed that she always tried to do things calmly and pay close attention to the class and to her work. However, the observations showed that she not only paid close attention to class lectures, but also engaged in almost all other learning categories. There were three learning practices with a high number of instances: 1) Writing notes, 2) Using notes as reference, and 3) Using an electronic translator.

Throughout the observations it was recorded that Daniela usually wrote notes from the board as the instructor provided examples. The activities that this class performed consisted mainly of writing sentences on the board. Her notes were usually copied examples written on the board either by the instructor or by other students. Daniela was very attentive and ready to write down important sentence examples during these exercises. Sometimes she also copied items from the textbook which may have also been sentences used for later reference.

Along with writing notes from examples given by the instructor, Daniela consistently referred to already written notes from previous assignments or from handouts provided by the instructor. She also referred to the textbook as an extra resource during a writing assignment. Referring to the textbook, handouts, or other written notes constituted a high occurrence for learning practices in her English writing class. Referring to these sources was very common for Daniela and it seemed to be productive as well.

Another learning practice used by Daniela was her electronic translator. In almost every class observation Daniela's use of her electronic translator was recorded. When asked about her dependence on an electronic translator, she responded that it was excessive. During her interview, she also stated that the electronic translator was used mostly in her writing class. It seemed obvious that she had difficulty trying to fully understand the meaning of some of the words that she tried to use as she wrote her paragraphs. Daniela used her electronic translator both in the classroom as well as in the computer lab. For Daniela, the electronic translator was an important tool and learning practice.

**Manuel.** Manuel described his learning practices during his L1 education as *writing notes* and *using references, such as textbooks, notes, or handouts*. While he described that the courses in engineering and Math required him to take extensive notes and use the textbooks to practice, observations showed that he engaged in the practice of listening carefully or paying close attention to the instructor and asking questions in his English writing class. Observations also indicated that he used a manual dictionary for translating and also engaged in class participation.

Although Manuel was not too fond of using traditional dictionaries, he used a dictionary two times throughout the observations. During the interview sessions Manuel emphasized the fact that in his L1 education experience there were not that many computers available for academic support. He made specific reference to the resources and tools that are currently available for translating, such as dictionary.com and other internet and electronic translators. He also made reference to Microsoft Word and how it helps correct grammatical or spelling errors when writing (or typing). He explained that since he has been learning English he forces himself to practice English in every way possible. As examples he mentioned that his e-mails are all in English, his cellular phone is programmed to be in English, he listens to music in English, and he reads magazines in English.

Class participation was another learning practice that Manuel used during his English writing class. Although he had some difficulty with pronunciation and with finding the right words to express his comments or ask questions, it was recorded that Manuel participated up to 3 times. It could be noted from the observations that Manuel usually had the right ideas and responses, but his fear of not knowing the correct vocabulary kept him from participating more. While he was always attentive and ready to work on any given task, his spoken English seemed to be a great challenge for him.

**Aurora.** During the interview session, Aurora described her learning practices as relating words to images and using highlighters. These learning practices, however, were not included in the learning practice tables (Tables 27 and 28), since only Aurora mentioned them. Relating words to images was described as a strategy when she needed to learn and memorize extensive terminology in the area of nursing. Aurora specifically talked about the course in Anatomy,



where memorization was the key to passing the exams and the course. She explained that her way of memorizing the vocabulary terms was finding images, letters, or numbers that would relate to the term. Her explanation was recorded as follows:

Por ejemplo, para acordarme de los huesos, era más fácil contar los huesos en el brazo y luego ya asocio tres con algo, buscaba la manera de acordarme.

*For example, in order to remember the bones it was easier to count the bones on the arm and then I associate three with something. I used to look for ways to remember.*

While she used images or other elements to relate to words that she needed to learn or memorize, Aurora mentioned that she did not possess a photographic memory. She did not know how to explain if she used this technique in her English writing class because her main problem was beyond just knowing terms.

When asked about using highlighters, Aurora explained that in her L1 education experience she used this technique to identify important concepts. For example, she explained that although in Mexico there was no need to translate, there were certain terms in Spanish that she did not know what they meant. Therefore, her learning practice in this case was to identify the term by using a specific color of highlighter to review it and look for its meaning at a later time. In her English writing class, she claimed that she similarly marked unknown words in English with an orange highlighter and then translated the word(s) at home.

During her interviews, Aurora described herself as being very shy. She explained that in Mexico she did not like to answer any question during class because other students laughed and made fun of her. She stated that any time she had a question she had to wait until the end of class to talk to the teacher personally or ask a classmate who knew what she needed to know. Although there was no record of her asking questions during the observations, she claimed that she also waited until the end of class to ask questions to the instructor or looked for a classmate that could explain to her what she needed to know, like she did in Mexico. She also stated that in the English writing class she preferred to see examples of the lesson, rather than listen only to what was being taught since comprehension in English was a big challenge for her.

It appeared that the most important learning practice for Aurora was translating. During observations it was recorded that she used her dictionary 3 times to translate words. The learning practice that she benefitted more from was writing words in her L1 as paragraphs were read, sentences were written on the board by other students, or videos were shown in English. She explained that when she wrote in English, she used words in her L1 that substituted the English words that she didn't understand. This process allowed her to continue following the rhythm of the class, while at the same time marking the words that needed to be translated.

**Summary.** The learning practices used in Mexico as described by participants varied greatly, depending on the individual backgrounds and academic experiences of the students. A pattern was, nonetheless, noticed and found from the interview data that described the practice of *asking questions* and *writing notes* as a significant form of learning during participant L1 education. While other learning practices were widely distributed throughout the different

categories as shown in Table 26 (pg. 226), almost all participants talked about the need of written notes and the need to inquire about class material.

Observational data, on the other hand, indicated a relatively different way of learning in the English writing class than what was used in Mexico. While interviews provided more detailed participant self-description data, some observation descriptions helped support or contrast participant self-perceptions. For example, Aurora described herself as a very shy and introverted student during her university experience. During her English writing class she still appeared to be very timid. Zoila, in contrast, explained that her learning practices did not fully include participation in class while in Mexico; however, her participation in her English writing class ranked among the highest in the learning practice categories as described in Table 27.

### **Perceived Usefulness of L1 in Learning English**

A great component of this study, in addition to learning *if* and *how* participants used their native language to learn English was the opinion students had towards using their L1. Understanding how participants felt about their L1 required open-ended questions that explored students' perspectives (Creswell, 2009). To examine participant perceptions the third research question was: *How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?* In order to answer this question interview data were used exclusively. In addition to findings regarding learning practices, interviews also provided data to understand what participants thought about using their L1 and if they felt that using it during their writing instruction was productive. Along with getting a sense of how each participant felt about using or not using L1 in class, the intention was also to obtain opinions regarding advantages or disadvantages about its use. While observations provided data regarding subconscious behavior

of learning practices and language use, interviews provided conscious thoughts about the role the L1 played for each participant.

In order to obtain participants' perceptions, the following question was asked during the first interview session: *Do you feel that using your first language is beneficial when you are learning English?* The range of responses was broad and sometimes not too straightforward. For example, some participants responded with a straight *yes* or *no* to the benefits of using L1, while others did not give a *yes* or *no*, but rather gave an explanation as to why they used it or didn't use it in certain cases. Manuel was one of the participants who gave a straight answer stating that the L1 was not beneficial for him. His response is presented below:

Definitivamente No. Es uno de los principales problemas que tengo. Pienso en español y quiero hablar en inglés. Obviamente es distinto, eso me lleva mucho tiempo y traigo un conflicto mental fuerte en tratar de superarlo. Conozco muchas palabras. Aquí lo interesante es que....mi principal problema es que pienso en español para hablar en inglés. Quiero primero entenderlo en español y luego traducirlo al inglés y en ese inter la diferencia para acomodar las palabras es donde se me va el tiempo, estoy bien consciente y yo mismo me lo noté. Inclusive, el semestre anterior tenía lo contrario, quería hablar más rápido de lo que pensaba y es una de las observaciones que me hizo la maestra, "Manuel tranquilo". Ahorita estoy teniendo ese reto de pensar en inglés.

*Definitely not, it's one of the main problems that I have. I think in Spanish and I want to speak in English. Obviously it's different, that takes a lot of time and I have a big mental conflict in trying to overcome it. I know a lot of words. Interestingly, my main problem is that I think in Spanish to speak in English. I want to understand it first in Spanish and then translate it to English and the time that I arrange the words is where I lose time, I'm conscious of it and I notice it. In fact, last semester I did the opposite, I wanted to speak faster than I was thinking and that was one of the observations that the instructor made. Right now I'm challenging myself to think in English.*

Manuel was very explicit in his description of the reasons why he felt that the use of his L1 was not productive for him. For this particular question, he asserted that the presence of his L1 in his mind during his English learning was simply a disadvantage that created more problems rather than help him in any way.

Another participant who provided a direct response to the question about the benefits of L1 was Aurora. In contrast to Manuel's negative response, however, Aurora explained that she needed to use L1 despite the recommendation of many people to do otherwise. Her response is presented below.

Sí. Esa es la mayor dificultad que tengo porque todo el mundo me dice que no debo de traducir las oraciones y es lo que hago, las traduzco y trato de traducirlas y más o menos me doy una idea.

*Yes, that's the biggest difficulty that I have because everyone tells me that I'm not supposed to translate sentences and that's what I do. I translate them and I try to translate them and I get the idea more or less.*

The goal of this question was to go beyond a simple *yes* or *no* answer and to try to get students' perceptions in a more detailed manner. However, some participants elaborated on their responses without giving a direct *yes* or *no* answer. An example was Zoila. When asked the question whether she thought her L1 was beneficial during the first interview session, she talked about what she tried to avoid doing, rather than answering the question. When asked a similar question during the second interview she described her opinion. She described her affirmative response giving the impression that she was hesitant about giving such response. Her explanations are presented below.

#### First Interview Session

Trato de no cambiar mucho porque es diferente la estructura entonces como nos han dicho los maestros que no lo tratemos de traducir porque a veces no suena bien. Estoy tratando pero es natural.

*I try not to interchange too much because the structure is different and also the instructors have told us not to translate because sometimes it doesn't sound right. I'm trying but it comes natural*  
[No direct response].

### Second Interview Session

Debo decir que no debería tener mucha importancia, pero sí, es como que te afecta porque todo lo pienso en español todavía. Entonces, lo que hacemos mucho es traducir y cuando traduces no es bueno porque no es lo mismo, es completamente diferente.

*I must say that it shouldn't be important, but it is because it's like if affects me because I still think of everything in Spanish. What we do a lot is translate and when you translate it is not good because it's not the same, it's completely different* [Hesitating about response].

Unlike Manuel and Aurora who gave a direct response and appeared to be more firm about their beliefs, Zoila seemed to have doubts throughout the interview sessions. While her response regarding the role that her L1 played in her English writing learning was ultimately positive, she displayed some hesitation trying to recognize her L1 to be a resource for her learning.

In addition to investigating participants' perception of the use of L1, another objective was to discover how consistent their responses were at different points during the two interview

sessions. Collecting data on students' perceptions during the second interview aided in ensuring reliability of the responses during the first interview. In order to accomplish this, a similar question as the one in the first interview session (*Do you feel that using your first language is beneficial when you are learning English?*), along with other follow up questions were asked during the second interview session in order to check for consistency as can be seen in Zoila's second interview response above. The question used during the second interview was: *For you, is your L1 important in your ESL classes? How important is it?* Although worded differently, both questions aimed at exploring participant beliefs about their L1. In spite of differences or similarities in participants' responses, taking the writing courses appeared to have changed some students' views towards their L1 use from one interview to the other. Exposure to the curriculum of the writing courses and their participation and performance in the class seemed to have influenced how students felt about the role of their L1. Specifically, participation in class was an important indicator of differences in opinions regarding L1 use. Those students who exhibited higher participation during observations were the same students who had mixed opinions about the usefulness of their L1 during their academic English learning (see Table 27, p. 227).

Asking these two questions during the second interview sessions demonstrated that some of the responses did show some inconsistencies on participant perceptions regarding the advantages or disadvantages of using L1 in their English writing instruction. For example, Elizabeth explained during her initial interview that using her L1 was beneficial. She claimed that being able to translate was a useful way of doing her work. However, by the second interview she claimed that L1 would only get on her way as a barrier when learning to write in English. Elizabeth's responses are presented below.



First Interview Session

Sí, porque lo traduzco. Todo lo que pienso primero lo pienso en español y luego lo traduzco al inglés. Me da la orden, la capto y ya no la traduzco. Pienso lo que voy a hacer en español pero no la traduzco.

*Yes because I translate. Everything that I think I do it first in Spanish and then I translate it to English. They give me the order, I understand it, and I don't translate it. I think about what I'm going to do in Spanish but I don't translate.*

Second Interview Session

Para el inglés, pues no tanto porque no tiene nada que ver. Es muy diferente y uno, pues, traducir exactamente a lo que yo quiero decir en inglés. Como que ya lo voy viendo diferente....

*For learning English, not really because it has nothing to do. It is very different to translate exactly what I want to say in English. I'm starting to see it very different...*

After spending a few more weeks in the writing class, Elizabeth's responses exhibited a change in her perception about the role that her L1 played in her studies. The time spent in the

writing class and her performance appeared to have changed her view about her L1. The interview transcriptions indicated that Elizabeth had different opinions that described a supporting role for her L1 in the first interview, while in the second interview she totally refuted the idea of having a need for it. Elizabeth was one of the students who participated more as reflected in the observations.

Nadia was another participant who claimed during the first interview session that the L1 was a useful source to learn English writing. She described the need to translate to be able to continue working on class assignments. In her response during the first interview, however, she did not specify if she was referring to using L1 in the writing class or if she meant using it in general. During the second interview session, she explained that, specifically in the writing class, the L1 was not important. The following interview transcriptions illustrate her responses.

#### First Interview Session

Sí, muchas veces tengo que traducirlo en español para poder entender lo que quiere decir, o sea, en ocasiones hay una palabra que no sé que es y por esa palabra ya no sé que sigue. Si hay una palabra que no entiendo, ya no puedo entender lo demás. Entonces si lo tengo que utilizar.

*Yes, many times I have to translate it to Spanish in order to understand what it means, that is, sometimes there's a word that I don't know what it is and because of that word I don't know what's*

*next. If there's a word that I don't understand I can't understand the rest. Then I have to use it.*

### Second Interview Session

En escritura yo considero que no porque la gramática es diferente. Es importante para cuando tengo que hablar, es cuando traduzco todo porque si todo lo que traduzco en español lo quiero escribir esta equivocado. Hay algunas cosas que si son importantes, pero en escritura yo pienso que es como aprender de nuevo, como si fueras niño y estas aprendiendo otra vez.

*In writing I don't think so because the grammar is different. It is important when I have to speak. It is when I translate everything because if I want to write everything that I translate in Spanish it will be wrong. There are some things that are important, but in writing I think that it is like learning from scratch, like a little child learning again.*

In a similar fashion as Elizabeth, Nadia contended during the first interview session that her L1 was necessary to understand words that kept her from advancing in her work. In the second interview session, however, she claimed that her L1 was not beneficial in her writing class stating that the grammar in the two languages (English and Spanish) was not the same. She

further stated that her L1 may be useful for speaking, but not for writing. Nadia was also one of the students with higher participation, making this a possibility for her change in opinions regarding her L1 usefulness.

Although the question about participants' opinions regarding the benefits of using L1 makes no specific reference to the writing class, but to learning English in general, the uncertainty of not giving a *yes* or *no* response gave the impression that some participants were not sure how they themselves felt about their L1 use. Drawing on interview responses, Table 29 below summarizes participant opinions and comments about their L1 use.

**Table 29:**

*Participant Views of Their Native Language*

PERCEPTIONS OF L1 USE INTERVIEWS						
	L1 BENEFICIAL FIRST INTERVIEW SESSION	REASONS	L1 BENEFICIAL SECOND INTERVIEW SESSION	REASONS	COMMENTS	HOW L1 IS MOSTLY USED BY PARTICIPANTS
Elizabeth	Yes	Because she is able to understand class content by translating to L1	No	Because it has nothing to do with the English language	She feels that she needs to start thinking in English already	To translate unknown words
Nadia	Yes	Because she is able to translate; She has trouble when she encounters a word that she doesn't understand and that keeps her from continuing her work	No	Because the grammar in both languages is different	She feels that thinking first in Spanish and then in English is a big problem	To translate unknown words
Cristina	Yes	Because some words in L1 look similar in English. It helps her identify the subject and the verb.			She claims that what she knows in her L1 helps her to learn L2. When writing, she claimed that she would first	To translate unknown words and organize ideas

		Knowing grammar rules in L1 is helpful because they are similar in English.			write entirely in L1 and then in English.	
Zoila	Yes	Because when she writes it is helpful to arrange the writing the same way she would arrange it in her L1			She claims that her L1 comes natural even if she doesn't want to use it. She did not sound too convinced because she stated that translating is not good, but admits that the L1 is still important. When writing she tries to think directly in English.	Arranging the order of a paragraph
Daniela	Yes	Because she translates unknown words to her L1 in order to understand the topic of discussion			She starts thinking in English from the beginning, but when she doesn't know what word in English to use, she thinks of a word in her L1 and then translates it to English to continue.	To translate unknown words and organize ideas
Manuel	Yes	To use as a grammar reference only	No	Because he claimed having a mental conflict when he thinks in L1 and wants to speak English. He stresses that thinking in L1 to speak	Sees translation as a problem. Short-term translating is a problem, but long-term it is a benefit. He claims that the L1 is an obstacle to speak and to understand English. However, he claims that for	To translate unknown words

				English is not productive.	grammar his L1 is beneficial.	
Aurora	Yes	Because she writes her first drafts entirely in her L1 and then translates everything.			Everyone (she did not specify who, e.g. classmates, instructors, friends, etc.) tells her not to translate, but that's the way she understands the work. It is easier for her to translate at home because she takes her time to do it.	She writes class material in L1 and then translates it to English. When she listens to a video and takes notes or when she writes in English and runs into a word she doesn't understand, she writes the word(s) in her L1 and at home she translates.

Table 29 shows a variation in opinions regarding the usefulness or ineffectiveness of using L1 or having L1 as a resource when learning academic English. As displayed, some of the participants convincingly gave an affirmative response providing supporting arguments for their opinions. Interestingly, those who gave a negative response also gave an affirmative response with their respective reasons. Out of all the participants, Manuel was the only participant who talked profoundly about his reasons for not wanting to use his L1 as a major source of academic English learning.

In trying to address the participants' preference or objection to using L1, direct questions were asked that required a plain *yes* or *no* answer along with their supporting arguments. However, because of the nature of the semi-structured interview protocol that allowed follow-up questions (Brenner, 2006) during both interview sessions, some of the responses did not follow a consistent pattern. For example, when the question about the participants' opinion regarding the use of their L1 was asked (e.g., *Do you feel that using your first language is beneficial when you*

*are learning English? How?*), other questions that varied from participant to participant followed depending on their response. In Elizabeth's interview, for instance, the question that immediately followed was regarding her using L1 or L2 when she worked in her writing class assignments. Because her response had to do with writing in English only in the tenses that she knew at the time (e.g., the present tense), the next question was about tenses. In Daniela's interview the follow up question was about translating as a learning practice because she spoke about her inability to understand class discussions if she didn't use her L1 to translate. In Zoila's interview the follow up question was about the use of dictionaries. This question was used with Zoila because she mentioned having to check the translation of words in her L1 that she thought sounded correct in English.

Whether semi-structured follow up questions to the core questions on the interview protocol were numerous or very limited the intention was getting participants to elaborate as much as possible on their responses. Using follow up questions that linked participants' immediate responses to original core questions was necessary to obtain a clearer picture of participants' overall perception of the use of their L1. Despite the variation of follow up questions, the data provided by all participants indicated a clear distinction of opinions (regarding L1) that appeared to be driven by age, L1 educational experience, English language education goals, or personal beliefs.

The third research question sought a more individualized response rather than a categorical one. Understanding participants' view of their L1 and whether or not it applied to their academic English learning process was an important component of this dissertation. The number of instances where participants used their L1 in class or the learning practices they engaged in may all be derived from the perception they had towards the use of their native

language when learning academic English. The way they felt about the role their L1 played in their academic English learning process may have been the key to how many times they used it and under what circumstances it may have been used.

Understanding participant perceptions of their L1 early in the semester and then again towards the end of the semester was an important element in this study. Exposure to and participation in the class seemed to impact student mentality of what role their L1 played. Different core questions and the flexibility to use follow up questions allowed for a clearer examination of participant L1 views. Learning about Elizabeth's view of her L1, for example, required asking questions that made reference to her educational level. When asked about how she would feel if she had only studied up to elementary level, she explained that maybe she would not be in school. She stated that, perhaps, her mentality would have been more focused on learning English just to obtain a job. She claimed that with her high school education she had set more educational objectives and responsibilities because now she knew that she needed a good education in English.

Some participants considered their L1 as a problem while others saw it as a benefit. Elizabeth, Nadia, and Manuel were participants who had negative opinions. Nadia's position, for instance, was more inclined towards the belief that the use of L1 was a problem. The reasons for her claim originated from the notion that the grammar of her L1 was not necessarily the same as English grammar. She explained that her L1 may be important when she tried to speak because she generally needed to translate a word here and there. However, when she referred to writing in English she felt that her L1 was a problem because translating her writing from her L1 to English often produced an outcome that was totally different. Manuel's opinion was similarly negative. From the very beginning of the interviews, Manuel's position regarding his use of the



L1 during his English writing class was not positive. He was always firm in his point of view claiming that his L1 was a problem, specifically when trying to speak and understand spoken English. He said that he considered having a mental block when he tried to think in English, but his L1 remained as a default mechanism. He did have, however, a positive opinion regarding the grammar in his L1 because he claimed that his L1 grammatical knowledge was definitely a supporting element for his English grammar learning. According to Manuel, grammar is the foundation of a language and knowing the grammatical structure of his L1 allowed him to bridge this knowledge and conceptualize the grammatical structures in English more easily

Manuel claimed that his L1 was definitely an obstacle when he tried to speak, especially when speaking was the main objective of learning English. He explained, however, that having a good grammatical foundation in his L1 was an important step. The next step was to remove the habit of thinking in L1 and translating to English or vice versa. When asked about how he used his L1 to learn English, he mentioned that he used it to understand, but not to learn. He explained that his L1 was practically to understand, for example, engineering or other terminology similar to terminology in English. When learning how to discuss, express, or ask questions in English, this was a different situation.

Table 30 below summarizes the general perceptions that each participant described about their L1 taken from the data collected during interviews.

**Table 30:**

***Participant Perceptions of L1 Use***

	Elizabeth	Nadia	Cristina	Zoila	Daniela	Manuel	Aurora
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<b>Positive</b>			√	√	√		√
<b>Negative</b>	√	√				√	

Four out of the seven participants expressed positive opinions about their L1 when learning academic English. Cristina specifically talked about how some English words are similar to Spanish words and, for her, this similarity was extremely beneficial. She further discussed how being able to identify the subject and the verb in her L1 allowed her to also identify the subject and verb in English more easily during her writing assignments. Zoila similarly believed that her L1 was important as a resource to fall back on when she was faced with challenges about meaning in English. She described specifically that she often thought in her L1 as a mental default mode. When she explained this process of thinking in her L1 first, she also mentioned that doing this was not good. Initially she mentioned that she should not even admit that the L1 was important, but ultimately contended that it was true. Aurora also supported the use of her L1. Her point of view towards the use of her L1 was extremely positive from the very beginning. She described her L1 as an important resource when learning how to write in English because she wrote her drafts, notes, and examples in her L1 and then translated as needed. Despite suggestions from instructors and peers not to translate, she explained that she had to translate and use her L1 in order to fully understand what was being taught and what she needed to work on. She claimed that it was simply not possible for her to study and learn English without the use of her L1. She was the only participant who emphatically supported and favored the use of her L1 in every aspect.

Some participants exhibited uncertainty in their opinions regarding their L1 use. In fact, it was more common to notice how participants expressed mixed opinions. Although Zoila

claimed that her L1 was a resource for learning academic English, she was one of the participants who hesitated to declare that L1 had a positive role in her learning process. While other participants bluntly recognized their L1 as an important factor in their English learning, Zoila initially supported a no-translating alternative and using English right from the beginning.

Some participants favored the two alternatives: English only and L1 use in the classroom. Despite Nadia's opposition to the use of her L1 during activities such as brainstorming, she explained that having a class where an instructor can readily clarify difficult to understand concepts in English by using students' L1 was fundamental. She talked about the differences between writing in English and writing in Spanish stating that if an instructor did not know students' L1, it would be more difficult for him/her to correct and assist the students. From a pedagogical perspective, Nadia felt that instructors' use of students' L1 was more beneficial and productive for all students. Daniela was another participant who favored an English class having a bilingual instructor. Although Daniela maintained that her L1 was important in her classes, she stated during one of her interview sessions that she would prefer a class totally in English because she felt that students would learn best. Later in the interview, however, she also stated that she would still prefer having an instructor who spoke English, but who would readily be willing to use her L1. In this sense, Daniela's perception of her L1 as a learning resource was still interpreted as beneficial. Aurora's philosophy mirrored Nadia's and Daniela's. When asked about her preference in having an instructor who spoke only English as opposed to having an instructor who allowed the use of students' L1, Aurora stated that she would much rather have an instructor with the flexibility of using students' L1.

Although the opinions of each participant regarding the use of their L1 as they learned academic English varied, they all agreed that their native language is ultimately a resource in one

way or another. Some participants' mixed opinions gave way to unclear ideas of how they "should perceive" their own L1. Findings to the third research question suggested that participants were not ready to clarify how they felt about using their L1 to learn English.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

To answer the research questions, data were collected using classroom observations, participant interviews, and reflective journals. Coding and organizing the data into topics (Creswell, 2009) in tables and figures was the next step in order to analyze and come up with conclusions. The process of coding involved the collection of raw data, organizing the data for analysis, reading and reviewing all the data, and coding the data and developing themes. As the coding process evolved, themes emerged allowing for the comparison of patterns of behavior (Anderson-Levitt, 2006) among all participants. Each of the research questions required different forms of data collection that concentrated on specific elements of participant behavior, academic experience, and language orientation.

The first question targeted the frequency and the circumstances under which adequate formal learners accessed and used their L1 as they engaged in English writing instruction. This question was intended primarily to find out if these learners even used their L1 during their English writing instruction. While the question implied that participants used their L1 as a taken-for-granted learning resource, the degree of participants' use or non-use of their L1 was ultimately the objective.

The first part of the question required quantitative data that reflected the frequency of participant L1 use. In order to find the frequency of L1 use, it was necessary to focus on routine classroom behavior where participants could display their normal interactive process with their

instructors and their peers. To learn about the number of instances where participants used or didn't use their L1, classroom observation data were collected several times for each participant. Observation recordings were tallied and noted on Table 6 (p. 166) indicating quantitative data that reflected each individual participant use of their L1.

The second part of the first research question required a specific focus on the reasons or purposes participants used their L1. In order to find the circumstances under which participants used their L1, qualitative data that consisted of classroom observations were also necessary concentrating on the purpose each participant used their L1. As Smith (2006) explains, a major objective of gathering qualitative data is to understand the behavior of the subjects being studied, while at the same time examine how the context influences this behavior. Findings not only showed that participants used their L1 during their writing classes, but also that there were specific circumstances where their L1 use was more apparent than in others. Table 11 (p. 172) summarized the specific circumstances organized by individual participants. Moreover, given that instructor teaching style, instructor attitude, and classroom language use guidelines may have played a role in participant use of L1, a summary of the same categories of L1 use organized by instructor were also collected. Table 12 (p. 177) summarized circumstances of L1 use data organized by instructor.

An additional data collection component used for question number one was the reflective journals written by participants. This data collection method was used to supplement the categorized circumstances of L1 use by participants. These journals were used to gather supplemental data regarding how participants used their L1 after each week of attending their respective writing classes. Participants were asked to write a brief summary each week to describe if and how their L1 was useful and in what ways. While some of the responses were

very limited, others provided detailed data. After analyzing all reflective journals responses, 6 different categories emerged and were coded in the following areas:

- Translating
- Organizing
- Referring to L1 School
- Using Cognates
- Communicating
- Participating

The findings showed consistency among all participants in the use of L1 for translating purposes, as described in all reflective journals submitted. Translating was identified as the highest reason for using students' L1 under this data collection method. All other coded categories displayed fewer references as was noted in Table 13 (pg. 182). In addition to classroom observations, participant reflective journals provided data to answer research question number one.

The second research question focused on any learning practices that participants brought with them from their L1 education experience. The goal was to determine what learning practices were used in Mexico and if these same learning practices were also used to learn academic English. An additional objective was investigating which learning practice was the most common in their English writing classrooms. Participant interviews and classroom observations were used to gather data in order to understand learning practices before and while taking English classes. During interviews participants discussed learning practices that they used while studying in Mexico. Classroom observations provided the data on learning procedures that

each participant followed as they sat in their English writing classrooms. The data was presented in Table 26 (p. 226), which listed the learning practices that participants described during their interviews as having been used in Mexico and Table 27 (p. 227), which listed the L1 learning practices participants reported during interviews as well as the practices that had been observed. Learning practice responses from the interviews varied distinctively from the observational data that was collected in the classrooms. During interviews some participants claimed to have learned in their L1 education by taking notes exclusively, while others explained how asking questions allowed them to better understand the lessons. Observational data reflected learning practices that not only paralleled L1 learning practices, but also indicated how participants relied on other learning practices that had not been used in their L1 education. The two data sets further indicated that participation in class was the most common learning practice by all participants in the English writing classes.

The third research question asked for the participants' perceptions of their use of L1 in learning academic English. In posing this question the intention was to make participants think and analyze what role their L1 played, if any, when learning a second language. The data collection method used for this question was participant interviews. Specifically, semi-structured interview protocol was used in order to have the freedom to ask follow-up questions relative to individual responses (Brenner, 2006). While the same core questions made up the interview protocol for all participants, there were other questions that served to build up on participant responses. Audio-taping and transcribing the interviews allowed for accuracy of the data collection. Participants were able to discuss openly about how they felt in using their L1 during their English writing classes. Specific questions about the benefits or the usefulness of using L1 were included in the interviews. While these questions presupposed that participants

viewed their L1 as useful, they had the liberty to agree or disagree. The findings for the third research question indicated that participants had both mixed and direct thoughts about using their L1 and its effectiveness as a learning resource in their writing class.

Chapter 5 will begin with a summary of the entire study. A review of the findings described in this chapter will also be presented. Conclusions drawn from these findings along with a brief discussion will follow. A discussion of possible implications derived from the conclusions will be provided. Finally, areas of further research pertaining to adult ESL education and the use of L1 in the adult ESL classroom will also be presented.



## CHAPTER 5

## FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

**Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine if and how adult adequate formal learners used their L1 to learn academic English in a university English language institute. For the purposes of this dissertation study, adequate formal learners were defined as those students who graduated from high school and/or earned a college degree in their country of origin and were, at the time of this study, enrolled in the English language institute.

This final chapter aims to conclude this study by reviewing the findings, drawing conclusions, considering implications, and suggesting directions for further research. The first section describes the problem and summarizes how this study was conducted. The second section presents the findings described in Chapter 4 followed by a brief discussion. The third section presents and discusses the conclusions drawn from the findings of each of the research questions. Educational implications are presented and discussed in the fourth section. In connection with what this dissertation study addressed, the final section describes recommendations for future research and concludes with a summary of the study.

**Summary of the Study**

As adult ELLs enroll in ESL programs at a high rate (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008), this area of adult education has become one of the fastest growing areas of adult education (Tucker, 2007). In spite of this growing trend, many adult ELLs confront challenging English-only policies found in many adult ESL classrooms (Auerbach, 2000; García, 2010; Judd, 2000; Lukes, 2009; Wigglesworth, 2005). In an attempt to avoid the use of students' L1 in the ESL

classrooms, English-Only policies target a quick immersion in English (Auerbach, 2000; Cummins, 2007). Contrary to English-Only instructional approaches, however, a growing number of research studies suggest that the use of students' L1 provides more benefits for adult students learning English as a second language (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Lukes, 2009; Murray, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003).

As adult students enter ESL programs, they bring with them different educational levels in their L1. These educational differences may affect if and how they use their L1 and also if they view it as an educational resource or as a learning obstacle. While some adult ELLs may be immigrants or refugees with no formal education in their L1, others may be well educated (Buttaro & King, 2001). Freeman and Freeman (2009) describe three categories of learners as: (1) Newly arrived with adequate formal schooling, (2) Newly arrived with limited formal schooling, and (3) Long-term English language learners.

Newly arrived students with adequate formal schooling are generally familiar with school experiences and bring with them a high level of literacy in their L1. Newly arrived students with limited formal schooling are those who have had to endure interruptions in their education as a result of war, poverty, or lack of schools in their countries of origin. Long-term English language learners are those students who have lived in the U.S. for seven years or more, but have not developed sufficient academic skills in either their L1 or L2 to succeed in school. While the academic backgrounds of adult ELLs may range from being preliterate to holding doctorate degrees in their L1 (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008), a sense of unity is, nonetheless, experienced by most adult ELLs (Wlodkowski, 2008).

Adequate formal learners were selected for this study because they were better prepared to use their L1 as they learned L2, given their L1 academic background and high level of

literacy. Students with limited formal education in their L1 and long-term English language learners may not possess the same capability to use their L1. Adequate formal learners, therefore, provided the best option for undertaking this research study.

This dissertation study was conducted to examine *if* and *how* adult ELLs used their L1 as they learned academic English. It also examined participants' *perception* of L1 and its use in their ESL studies. The following three questions were used to guide this study:

- 1) How frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?
- 2) What are the different learning practices (e.g., asking questions, drawing on cognates, participating in class, writing notes, etc.) that adequate formal learners used during their L1 educational experience?
- 3) How useful do adequate formal learners perceive their L1 to be as they develop academic English?

This study was conducted at an English language institute located in a university along the Texas-Mexico border. Given its border location, enrollment generally consists of Mexican citizens of whom 50% are commuter students. Mexican citizens from non-border Mexican states make up approximately 5% of the program's enrollment. International students from countries other than Mexico comprise an additional 5% of the program's enrollment. U.S. citizens or legal residents make up approximately 40% of the program's enrollment.

The selection of participants was done through a Learner Category Survey (Appendix A1 & A2) that was distributed to 35 students in the beginning level writing classes during the fall

2010 semester. Eight participants were purposely selected based on their level of education in their first language with no regard to age or gender as determined by the Learner Category Survey. One of the participants originally selected had to withdraw from the study due to a personal emergency. All seven remaining participants were students in the adequate formal learner category. For the purposes of this study, students with secondary education or higher (e.g., high school or college) in their first language were considered adequate formal learners. At the time the data collection took place, participants were already enrolled in the intermediate level writing courses during the spring 2011 semester.

In order to answer the three research questions, a qualitative research study was conducted using three data collection methods: classroom observations, participant interviews using semi-structured questions and open-ended conversations, and reflective journals written by participants. Quantitative components were also necessary to strengthen this study and provide more detail in the findings. Tables displaying numerical data relating to the frequency of L1 use and the number of instances of different learning practices made up the quantitative component of this study.

The first research method used was classroom observations. Evertson and Green (1986) claim that “the purpose of the observation guides what will be done, how it will be used, and what can be obtained” (p. 247). Classroom observations were used throughout a three month period in the course of the spring 2011 semester. There were two main objectives in conducting classroom observations for this study: collecting data on participant behavior and data on language use. The goal of gathering information through classroom observation was to examine specific behavior that each participant displayed during their writing classes respectively throughout the semester. Data was gathered on specific participant behavior and

participant language use under particular circumstances (e.g., group activities, independent work, question/answer sessions, etc.).

In addition to classroom observations, participant interviews were also conducted. Participant interviews using open-ended questions provided insights not only as a follow-up on data collected during observations (particularly learning behavior patterns), but also on gaining an understanding of students' views of their own learning practices. Semi-structured questioning was used in order to ask "the same core questions with the freedom to ask follow-up questions that build on the responses received" (Brenner, 2006, p. 362). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The third research method consisted of content analysis of participant reflective journals (See Appendix E2). In order to supplement observation and interview data, participants were asked to write a brief summary of how their L1 was used each week. To assist them in formulating their responses, they were given the following question: "*In what ways did you use your native language to help you in today's lesson?*" Creswell (2009) claims that these more private documents that explain student's perceptions (in this case of the role of their L1) provide more personalized thoughts that may, otherwise, be missed or purposely omitted in other mediums. The purpose of having participant reflective journals was to "include data collection types that go beyond typical observations and interviews" (Creswell, 2009, p. 181).

### **Findings**

In order to answer the three research questions, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The first research question was a two-part question asking for the frequency and the circumstances of L1 use. While this research question implied that all participants used their

L1, the possibility of participants not using their L1 at all during their writing classes remained. However, findings indicated that all participants did, in fact, use their L1 in several different ways.

### **Research Question Number One**

The first part of the question regarding the frequency of L1 use by participants was determined by the number of L1 utterances that were observed and recorded throughout the classroom observations. In answering this part of the question, reasons or circumstances under which participants' native language was used were not taken into account, as the seven participants used their L1 under different circumstances. To measure L1 frequency, all the instances where participants used their L1 were tallied and recorded to obtain an overall number from each participant. While all participants used their L1 for different purposes, Elizabeth displayed the highest use of L1 and Cristina exhibited the lowest use of L1. It is important to mention, however, that L1 utterances were recorded in classrooms that had both high and low levels of interaction. Therefore, a small number of L1 utterances by participants in a low-interaction class may not necessarily be comparable to or reflect a significant difference from participants with a high number of utterances in a high-interaction class.

The second part of research question number one asked under what circumstances participants used their L1. Since it had been determined with the first part of the question that interaction in L1 was virtually unavoidable among all students and that all participants did, in fact, use their L1 regardless of their perception towards it, there was a need to organize particular categories of L1 interaction to determine the circumstances of its use. Hence, the findings of the first part of research question number one led to the findings of the second part of the question.

In summarizing all the categories that were identified during the observations, it was found that this sample group of adequate formal learners used their L1 to interact academically with classmates more than any other category. This interaction category included clarifying assignments, asking for the right answer, or inquiring about the correct spelling of words. Based on the findings, all participants used their L1 mostly to ask questions regarding the accuracy of their answers or to confirm instructions either given by the instructor or written on the textbooks or handouts.

The second highest category was the interaction participants had with their classmates during group activities. Given the nature of the group activities where participant and non-participant students were required to share and discuss their answers, opinions, and comments about specific topics, using students' L1 was very common. What could be perceived during observations was that during group activities participants had more flexibility to use their L1 with their classmates. The non-academic interaction, translation, and responding to instructor categories had significantly fewer occurrences bringing their percentages lower.

**Instructor influence.** Substantial influence in students' use of their L1 was the learning environment that each instructor created. In addition to the way each instructor reacted towards students' use of L1, their teaching style was an important factor that drove participants' decision to use it. For example, the learning environment of Instructor "A," who was the most tolerant and even user of students' L1 at times, created a comfortable and engaging atmosphere for students to learn and contribute during class participation. The scenario that instructor "A" created paralleled Auerbach's (2000) contention that adult ESL classes that involved students' L1 not only enhanced progress, but also facilitated communication and learner-centered

instruction. A high degree of class participation and learner-centered instruction was constantly observed in this classroom throughout the observation period. The participants enrolled in this instructor's class were Elizabeth, Nadia, and Zoila.

Instructor "B," on the other hand, offered a less inviting learning environment where students did not seem to want to participate as much as the students in Instructor "A's" class. Although Instructor "A" expected and encouraged the use of English at all times, the rhythm of her class and her dynamic style of teaching inspired students to interact and participate extensively. Instructor "B," in contrast, maintained a more monotonous and teacher-centered style of teaching where interaction was more compromised. Consequently, students in Instructor "B's" class exhibited less motivation not only to use English or L1, but to participate at all. During observations it was perceived that Instructor "B's" style of teaching significantly influenced participants' determination to use their native language in his class. The participants enrolled in this instructor's class were Cristina, Daniela, and Aurora.

While students in Instructors "A" and "B" classes could use their L1 to communicate with both instructors for any clarification, students in Instructor "C's" class did not have the same opportunity. Instructor "C" was a monolingual native English speaker whose students were forced to use English to communicate with her. All students in this class, however, seemed to be extremely content with this instructor's teaching style. Although at times some students appeared to have difficulty understanding and/or communicating with the instructor, they continuously interacted in group activities and participated during question and answer sessions. Because Instructor "C" was monolingual, most students expected no L1 tolerance. Interaction in students' L1, however, was still an inevitable procedure despite students' desire to communicate in English. Although Instructor "C" was tolerant of students' L1 use, she constantly stimulated



discussion and student participation entirely in English. As opposed to Instructor “B,” Instructor “C” taught her class in a fun and exciting way that encouraged students to participate extensively. The only participant enrolled in this instructor’s class was Manuel.

Instructors “A” and “C” created a learning atmosphere that was comfortable for students to participate in their classes. Students’ participation involved communication in their L1 with classmates and sometimes with the instructor (in the case of Instructor “A”). Although Instructor “B” concentrated on a more unidirectional teaching approach, students still interacted among themselves using their L1 mainly when working on class assignments.

Participants’ native language was still a necessary medium of communication in all English writing classes observed, regardless of classroom rules or instructor expectations. Whether the instructors objected to students’ L1 use or not, participants found ways to use it with or without instructors’ knowledge. Observation findings suggested that it was nearly impossible to witness exclusive English language interaction among students and with instructors.

### **Research Question Number Two**

The second research question dealt exclusively with participant learning practices and required qualitative and quantitative findings. The answer to this research question was divided into two phases of data collection. The first phase consisted of interview data relative to the learning practices that participants declared having used during their L1 education. The second phase consisted of observation data focusing on participant behavior that showed learning practices used during their English writing classes. These two data sets were categorized and analyzed. The goal was to investigate whether learning practices used in participants’ L1 education were also used as they learned academic English. An additional objective was to

determine what learning practice in the English writing class was the most commonly used by this adequate formal schooled learner group.

The first phase of the data collection for research question number two consisted exclusively of interview data. In trying to determine the most common learning practices that students experienced during their education in Mexico, it was necessary for participants to think about effective learning methods applied throughout their L1 academic experiences. During the interviews each participant elaborated on their preferred ways of learning which ranged from non-participation to asking frequent questions in class. Gathering information about what learning skills participants relied on became the focus of the first phase of this data collection method.

The second phase of the data collection for research question number two consisted of classroom observations. The objective of this data collection method was to capture learning practices by each individual participant in their normal course of learning in a natural ESL classroom setting (Ho et al., 2006). Understanding how participants engaged in their academic English learning process served to examine any relationship to their L1 learning process.

Findings showed great variation of learning practices from all participants. No participant engaged in the exact same learning practices during their English studies as the ones claimed to have been used in their L1. It was found that all participants used far more learning practices during their English writing class than those claimed to have been used in Mexico. It was also found that class participation was the highest rated learning practice used by all participants. L1 learning practices described during interviews and those observed in the writing classes were identified and compared to determine this variation.

**Research Question Number Three**

The third research question focused on the individual perceptions participants had about their L1 during their academic English studies. The data collection method used to answer this question consisted exclusively of interview questions. While the interview questions concentrated on different areas of participants' learning experiences, understanding their views about the role their L1 played specifically was a crucial element in this dissertation study.

Although participants provided an array of both positive and negative comments and opinions regarding their view of their native language as a learning component, overall responses reflected a positive attitude towards the importance of their L1. Despite some comments that depicted a less significant or useless role of L1 for learning English writing, all participants ultimately agreed that their L1 had an important role as they learned academic English. The most widely mentioned role in this study was translating unknown words. Most participants expressed their need to translate words either in order to understand the lesson or to be able to finish classroom assignments. Other opinions included the need to access known items from participants' L1, such as learned academic knowledge or syntactical structures that allowed for grammatical comparisons and brainstorming activities.

Some participants described their L1 as a catalyst to their writing process in English. Participants like Cristina, for example, claimed that her L1 was useful when writing because she wrote her drafts entirely in Spanish and then in English. For Aurora her L1 was a crucial component because she supplied unknown terms in Spanish while she wrote a paragraph in English in order to continue writing, although this process required her to rely on her dictionary quite extensively. Zoila claimed that in spite of her efforts and willingness to think directly in

English as she wrote, her L1 simply came naturally. Whether they used it as a tool to scaffold their understanding or as a reference from their prior education, these participants agreed on the positive role their L1 played in their academic English learning process.

While there was a perceivable consensus on the usefulness of participants' L1, it also seemed like in some ways it was found to be an inconvenience for some students. Interview data revealed an apparent insecurity in some participants when responding to the question about the importance of the L1 as part of their English writing learning. Cristina, Zoila, Daniela, and Aurora were among those who displayed a positive opinion. Elizabeth, Nadia, and Manuel, however, were the ones expressing the idea that their L1 was an inconvenience in their English writing classes. Elizabeth, for example, seemed to have different opinions at different points during her interviews about what role her L1 played and how she perceived it. Nadia similarly described different thoughts about her L1. Although she recognized that translating words was necessary for her, she did express dissatisfaction in having to think first in Spanish and then in English. She described this process as a big problem. Manuel also explained that his L1 generally created a mental conflict that hindered his ability to speak in English. He viewed Spanish as a barrier most of the time, except when he needed to make language comparisons. The only benefit that Manuel described of his L1 was the grammatical knowledge that he possessed that allowed him to relate it and compare it to English grammar. Because of this knowledge, according to Manuel, understanding English grammar was easier.

In spite of the perceptions each participant had regarding their use of L1, there were interesting contradictions. The highest users of L1 (e.g., Elizabeth, Zoila, and Nadia) in this study were those who claimed that their native language was an obstacle or were hesitant to consider their first language as a useful resource for their English learning process. Elizabeth,

for example, who talked positively about her L1 during the first interview session and then spoke negatively during the second session, used her L1 at a high rate. Despite her divided opinions, Elizabeth's preference (and need) for using her L1 was apparent. Her extensive participation in her writing class gave way to her high rate of interaction in her L1.

Zoila had similar mixed opinions about her L1. She was hesitant to admit at first that her L1 was a useful learning resource. Although she gave the impression that her opinion about using her L1 was not favorable, she turned out to be a strong user of her native language and ended up being the second highest user. Furthermore, Zoila explained that she continuously had to write paragraph drafts in her L1 and later translate them into English for better and faster outcomes.

Nadia's position in regards to her native language was similarly unbalanced. Nadia's use of her L1 did not reflect what her perception was about using it as a learning resource. Since she claimed that communicating orally in English required translating from her native language to English in her mind, she contended that using her L1 was not beneficial. However, her claims clearly contradicted her behavior in the classroom and her reliance on her L1. While it was not expected for Nadia to exhibit a high degree of L1 use because of her unfavorable opinion, the frequency of her L1 use was one of the highest rated.

In contrast to Elizabeth's, Zoila's, and Nadia's unclear opinions, Aurora, Daniela, and Manuel expressed straightforward views of the use of L1 respectively. While Manuel expressed a negative opinion about his use of L1, Aurora and Daniela spoke positively about it. In fact, Aurora constantly emphasized that she could not learn in any other way than using her L1 to learn vocabulary and try to understand written assignments. Yet, her L1 use rating did not reflect excessive use as may have been expected. Manuel, on the other hand, was the only participant

whose frequency of L1 use coincided with his negative perception about his L1, as he was one of the lowest users. Manuel was the only one who bluntly expressed dissatisfaction in having to overcome the “obstacle” of his L1.

The lowest user of the L1 during writing classes was Cristina. Ironically and despite the low frequency of her L1 use, Cristina’s opinion about it was extremely favorable. Although she claimed that what she knew in her L1 helped her learn her L2, she was not a constant user of her native language in class.

Findings revealed that participants relied on their L1 periodically throughout the study. The findings of question number one identified how many times and for what purposes each participant used their L1. The findings of question number two indicated that participants used more learning practices as they learned academic English than those used in their L1. Findings also revealed that participants relied on classroom participation more than any other identified learning practice. The findings of question number three showed that participants had inconsistent views of the role their L1 plays in their L2 learning. Hence, findings in this study confirmed that participants used their L1 to learn L2 and felt comfortable participating in class, although they lacked a clear opinion about the significance of their native language.

### **Conclusions**

After reviewing and analyzing the findings of this research study, there were a few conclusions that were drawn. First, adequate formal learners use their L1 for both conversational and academic English. The results of research question number one suggest that the amount of L1 identified in the findings renders native language use a necessary learning tool for students. Participants required the use of their native language under certain circumstances while learning

the academic skill of writing in English. Additionally, students' native language played a key role in the informal communication among students during casual, non-academic interaction. Therefore, both aspects of learning—conversational and academic—are adequately supported by students' use of their native language.

Second, adequate formal learners require additional learning practices (techniques) to learn academic English than those used during their L1 education. The findings of research question number two identified students' extra efforts in trying to cope with learning how to write while also learning the English language. Regardless of the educational levels of each participant (e.g., high school and college), extra learning techniques were noted as students engaged in the lessons of their respective English writing classes. However, the most commonly used learning practice identified from all students was participation in class. It was concluded, therefore, that adequate formal schooled students, in spite of any prior learning experiences, seek classroom discussions and conversations when learning academic English. This technique ultimately benefitted both language acquisition and content material learning.

Third, some students are ambivalent about the role their L1 plays when learning L2. While most students ultimately agreed that their native language was useful, some of them were not explicit in their contentions. The responses during participant interviews revealed uncertainty in the way some students “should have felt” about their native language when learning English. Although some participants expressed the need (and desire) to use only English in the classroom, their L1 generally had to be part of their learning process.

The above conclusions were drawn from the findings obtained from the data analyses of each of the research questions. An important factor, however, that also affected the participants' use of L1 was the learning context. While instructor influence was not within the scope of this

dissertation study, it too substantially affected the outcome of the findings of all three research questions. In the next sections, a brief discussion of each conclusion is presented. A discussion about instructor influence is also presented as an added conclusion based on the findings.

### **Adequate Formal Learners Need Their L1 to Learn L2**

The first conclusion is taken from the findings of research question number one that indicated how students' native language was used throughout the study. Based on the findings, this group of adequate formal students cannot learn L2 without the support of their L1, since students' L1 was found to be a significant source for academic learning. The participants in this study shared two common traits: They were all educated (adequate formal schooled) and they all shared the same L1. Thus, this conclusion is limited to this sample group of participants and drawn from the fact that they were all educated Spanish speakers.

While the findings suggested L1 to be a good source for academic learning, it was similarly found to be a common medium for social and non-academic interaction in the classroom. Whether participants relied on their L1 extensively or moderately, it was evident that students had to use it as a way to support their comprehension and communication constantly during class. L1 use was so evident that throughout the observation period it seemed as if students did not feel an obligation to use English. Most, if not all, of their communication was in Spanish when they spoke with each other. Spanish was also used moderately with the instructors who could understand students' L1 during class. By observing students' behavior during class there was no doubt that their L1 was a needed component for both their learning and their regular routine communication.



**L1 for learning.** Students' L1 was undoubtedly an important learning support. Even though some students believed that learning English through more English was the best way to learn, as has been argued by some adult ESL educators (Auerbach, 2000; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Lukes, 2009), participants consciously and subconsciously exhibited a strong dependence on their native language. Whether this communication was within groups or during interactive sessions with the instructor and the entire class, all participants used their L1 throughout the observations.

**Group activities.** The use of students' native language increased dramatically during group activities where students needed to engage in conversations and discussions related to the lesson being studied. Since an important objective of most courses in this ESL program was student-centered interactive class sessions, group activity assignments were very common. It was rather difficult, however, for instructors to keep students' interaction entirely in English during these activities, given the fact that some of these classes had many students. When gathered into groups, students had the task of discussing topics to write about. A major difficulty, however, was finding words or phrases in English to meet the objectives of group assignments. Not knowing how to describe, explain, or debate any particular item in English during a discussion or in conversations while working in group activities limited the possibilities of English use among students leading them to rely on their L1.

**Interactive sessions.** When instructors lectured and engaged students in class discussions, many students took advantage of these opportunities and interacted and practiced their English. Although some students attempted to use English when responding to questions

posed by the instructors, there were numerous occasions where students needed to hold back on their responses because they had difficulty explaining their answers in English. In times of frustration, some students responded in Spanish to questions from the instructor in cases where almost all students in the class wanted to respond. In the case of Instructor “A,” for example, the dynamics of the class were so intense that almost all students wanted to participate, but many could not adequately structure complete sentences or did not know the exact words in English needed to provide the correct answer. During these interactive sessions with the instructors, students consciously and subconsciously relied on their L1 to be able to participate.

**L1 for routine communication.** Communication that was routine and casual was similarly conducted using their L1. Students periodically conversed with each other during class to borrow a pencil, to ask what time it was, to inquire about plans for lunch, or even to make fun of other classmates. While it was difficult for students to speak English during assignments and activities, it was more difficult for instructors to expect students to practice their English when discussing anything not related to the class. Any communication that was not intended for a grade was essentially conducted in Spanish. Despite the instructors’ efforts to encourage all students to use and practice their English inside and outside the classroom, students insisted on using their L1 even when their main objective was to learn English.

Students generally felt at ease when using their L1. When they had the opportunity to use it and they knew that their instructor would understand and possibly allow its use, they often included it in their regular class participation repertoire. Students occasionally code-switched their L1 and their L2 in an effort to supplement unknown words as a communication strategy (Wigglesworth, 2005) during class question and answer sessions. Using both L1 and L2

interchangeably was a common practice during informal, casual student conversations as well. The use of students' L1, therefore, served as a supporting tool when used alone or in combination with the L2. Although the degree of L1 use by the different participants varied, it was still made clear that their native language was a strong and necessary element of their learning and communicative process.

### **Adequate Formal Learners Engaged More in Class Participation**

The second conclusion is that adequate formal schooled students seek active class participation as a learning tool and motivator. Findings indicated that out of all learning practices observed, class participation outweighed all other learning techniques. Despite the different learning approaches identified from the interviews, adequate formal schooled students appeared to be active participants, since they sought more involvement in class. Although it was discovered that more learning practices were used while learning academic English than those used in Mexico, class participation was the highest rated.

While class participation is generally expected in U.S. K-12 classrooms, it seemed like Mexican students did not necessarily anticipate too much participation in Mexican classrooms based on the responses given. Interview data revealed that only one participant engaged in class participation while in Mexico giving the impression that Mexican education was more teacher-centered. In contrast to how classes may have been conducted during their L1 education, all participants literally engaged in class participation during their English writing classes. Class participation was found to be the most used learning practice while learning L2. In trying to learn and understand writing skills, students participated by voicing their opinions during

discussions or by giving out responses to questions asked by the instructors during class. All students participated using English and occasionally using their L1.

Learning practices used in Mexico were helpful in acquiring knowledge in the different subject areas. Being at the high school or college level, participants needed to concentrate on the best way for them to learn course material. Although some higher level terms may have been challenging at times during their L1 education, language was ultimately not a concern. In their attempt to learn English, however, participants confronted two challenges simultaneously: learning writing skills and learning English as a second language (L2). This double task required additional techniques to help them meet both objectives. The findings suggested that students do not process information in the same way when there is a need to acquire and learn a second language while trying to learn content material. All participants seemed to connect, adjust, and benefit from much needed class involvement. Therefore, engaging in class participation served to meet all participants' objectives.

### **Some Students Have Mixed Feelings about Using Their L1 When Learning L2**

The third conclusion is that there is uncertainty on how students should perceive their L1 when learning L2. Although students used their L1 under different circumstances, they generally viewed it as an obstacle to overcome as they learned L2. During interviews most participants expressed their preference for complete exposure to the target language to be successful even when they experienced extreme difficulty understanding, communicating, and writing. Since the beginning of the study, it seemed common for students to expect total use of the target language as has been argued by researchers (e.g., Judd, 2000; Lukes, 2009). Since the objective was ultimately learning L2, using or even thinking about L1 was out of the question. Most

participants, therefore, regarded their L1 as an impediment for their acquisition of English, although they relied on it numerous times during the study. When asked about their L1 use during their English learning, some participants had a reaction of guilt when they admitted using it. The impression was that if they had to explicitly argue in favor of their L1 and describe its benefits, they would not have done justice to their L2 education admitting that their L1 was useful. All of them felt that they needed to achieve an improved level of L2 acquisition and, therefore, their L1 could not logically be a learning resource.

Participants may not have realized that their native language was, in fact, a continuous part of their learning process. As much as students wanted to hide or deny their dependence on their native language, it was clearly noticeable how this linguistic resource aided their learning through translation, language comparison, classmate communication, or instructor clarification. Despite students' seemingly unperceived and/or unwanted dependence on their L1, there still appeared to be uncertainty in the way participants felt about the role their L1 played. During interviews, students constantly expressed their reluctance to use and rely on their L1 stating that it would be better to have an instructor who spoke only English to them all the time forcing them to be immersed in it. Immediately after expressing their desire to have an instructor who spoke only English, however, students still mentioned that they also preferred someone who could speak their L1 to be able to communicate quickly and to the point.

Despite their apparent resistance to recognize their L1 as a linguistic resource, all participants were conscious of the need to use it. No participant in this study may have stopped to think about the role their L1 played until they had to answer questions about their respective opinions regarding the use of L1. While some participants declared interest in classes conducted entirely in English, others did express their need to have freedom to use their L1 extensively.

During interviews participants appeared to be confused about how they were “supposed” to view their L1. It seemed like participants were simply not prepared to describe how they felt about using their native language in an academic English class.

### **Implications**

The three research study findings yielded important implications for those involved in the field of adult ESL education. The first conclusion stated that students learning L2 use their L1 under both academic and non-academic circumstances, implying that it is not uncommon for them to incorporate their native language as they learn L2. The second conclusion described how participants used different and additional learning techniques than those used during their L1 education with class participation being the most common. This implies that students with adequate formal schooling feel comfortable engaging in class participation, whether they use L1 or L2, and having this alternative increases their learning potential. The final conclusion states that there is an apparent misconception about the importance of students’ L1, implying that any misinterpretation must be reverted to make students conscious about how their L1 can be a strong resource for their L2 learning.

Implications derived from this study are directed to the personnel of adult ESL programs, such as administrators, instructors, and curricula developers. They are also directed to the adult ESL adequate formal schooled population. The implications drawn from the first two conclusions are suggestions for adult ESL program personnel. The final implication is directed to adequate formal schooled students enrolled in adult ESL programs.

**Implications for Adult ESL Program Personnel**

Given the perceived necessity (and preference) for using L1 by adequate formal schooled students in this study, it is important for adult ESL educators to consider teaching alternatives that may allow and potentially incorporate students' L1. The implications for both adult ESL personnel and ESL adequate formal school students are presented in the next sections.

**Use of students' L1 is not uncommon.** While the prevalent *common sense* belief of some educators that using English exclusively in the adult ESL classroom is the best way to learn English (Auerbach, 2000; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Lukes, 2009) continues, findings from this study suggested that adequate formal schooled students use their native language regardless. Students found themselves frustrated when they could not speak, comprehend, or interact with their instructors entirely in English. One of the objectives of this study was looking at students' linguistic behavior, and despite efforts to involve students in total English learning environments, students still often used their native language in the classroom.

Since students are bound to use their native language while learning L2, adult ESL instructors and program administrators need to consider curricula and/or instructional objectives that integrate some use of students L1 in order to enhance the learning potential of all students. Furthermore, adult ESL educators need to research and draw conclusions to inform adult students about the importance of L1. Not penalizing students for accessing their L1 to supplement their learning can dramatically reduce the affective barriers (Auerbach, 1993) and enhance L2 learning. Use of the native language in this study allowed students to reach their English learning objectives more freely and comfortably.

**Class participation is a preferred learning practice.** Findings from this study concluded that participants engaged in added learning practices than those used during their L1 education. Adult ESL educators, therefore, need to acknowledge how adequate formal educated students learn and how to maximize the potential they have towards learning a new language. One of the main learning practices observed was class participation, although this was not a seemingly common learning trait in their L1 education. Despite the way participants described their learning in Mexico, knowing that students have a willingness to engage in learning practices that may not be common to them is important when designing curricula. Participants in this study described learning practices that they used when they needed to master content material only during their L1 education. However, although learning the English language was a great challenge for some students, they were capable of finding alternate learning techniques that allowed them to acquire and learn both content and L2. The most significant learning practice that students pursued was class participation.

An implication that derives from this conclusion, therefore, is that adult ESL program personnel need to focus on activities that require active participation from students to meet academic objectives. Group activities in this study enhanced interaction and consequently increased learning through participation. The findings indicated that class participation was the most common learning practice used by all participants, thereby suggesting that learners with formal education in their L1 learn best by voicing their opinions, responding aloud, and taking part in class discussions. Taking into account the opportunities that adequate formal students have when they are exposed to the target language and allowed to create their own learning in a student-centered environment will improve academic performance.



**Implications for Adequate Formal Schooled Students**

An important implication for adequate formal schooled students in this study is the need to value their L1 as a linguistic resource during their L2 education. Almost all students had a strong opposition to recognizing their native language as an important resource during their English writing classes. Nonetheless, all participants relied on it frequently throughout the study. For L1 educated students, it is better to take advantage of their academic experience and make their L1 a strong learning supplement.

**Students need to acknowledge the significance of L1.** Cummins' (1980 and 1981a) Common Underlying Proficiency model explains that students can draw on acquired knowledge of literacy when learning a second language. Adequate formal schooled students in this study possessed the knowledge necessary to learn academic L2 and consequently used that knowledge to supplement their education. However, most participants generally spoke against using their L1 when learning L2, yet they referred to it frequently throughout the semester. While students need to adhere to school policies that dictate the use of English and be encouraged to use English as much as possible, they also need to understand and acknowledge how important their L1 can be. Furthermore, drawing on research on L1 use, instructors and administrators must educate all students about the importance of using L1 to scaffold English learning in an ESL setting. While English-Only objectives can remain an ultimate goal, policies that dictate English-Only in the adult ESL classroom need to be reconsidered or reformed in order to help students change their views toward their use of L1.

Declaring that their L1 was an obstacle and was not important did not preclude participants in this study from using it. Instead, they felt guilty (and confused at times) speaking

negatively of it knowing that it was necessary for their L2 learning. It is better to recognize the significance of the mother tongue and to support its use to the extent of gradually phasing out its use until English is the sole medium of communication and learning.

### **Future Research**

This dissertation study concentrated on adequate formal learners using L1 in trying to acquire academic English. The results and findings of this study will yield significant data pertaining to students seeking college degrees or other academic objectives. Furthermore, this study focused on a small sample of Spanish-speaking students in the adequate formal learner category (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Studies of a similar nature are needed as follow up research on adult L1 use in the ESL classroom.

First, a similar qualitative study guided by the same research questions needs to be conducted involving participants from different nationalities. Such a study could expand on the notion of L1 use and perception by students from different countries with other academic experiences, languages, and backgrounds. The importance of such a study would lie on the contribution to the adult ESL field where program goals involve academic objectives and college readiness. Understanding how students from different nationalities learn in their countries of origin could provide important data to help develop curricula that target learning practices relative to their respective learning styles. In addition to studying learning practices of students from different countries, formal and informal student interaction could be examined to see how different students who speak different languages communicate with each other as opposed to a group that speaks the same L1. Moreover, this type of study would shed light on the opinions students who speak different languages have on the use of their L1 when learning English.

Second, while this dissertation study investigated learning characteristics, specific degrees of L1 use, and student perceptions of using L1 as a learning resource from educated students (e.g., adequate formal schooled), further research is necessary to address the same questions to limited formal schooled students and Long-term English language learners (Freeman & Freeman, 2009). Individual qualitative studies that include participant interviews and classroom observations from each group need to be conducted to examine L1 education relationships to L2 learning along with student views on how useful student L1 may be. Furthermore, examining learning styles of each group is necessary to understand the most common learning practice. Research studies focusing on L1 limited formal schooled and Long-term English language learners must be conducted in order to provide a broader spectrum of learning styles and recommendations. With this knowledge educators will be able to identify and implement improved teaching and learning techniques for different kinds of adult learners.

Finally, drawing on the learning environment factor, instructor performance, attitude, and personal ESL orientation are significant variables to consider for future study. Given the significant influence that instructors have for students' use of L1, it is important to examine how instructors promote or hinder students' decision to use their L1 and how frequent. Such a study could examine the reaction of instructors and the philosophies that drive their decision to allow or prohibit students' L1 and the extent of its use. Findings could help uncover monolingual, bilingual, and/or multilingual instructor preferences in language use. A research study of this kind is necessary to understand L1 use in the adult ESL classroom from the instructor perspective.

Given the vast amount of literature pertaining to the topic of native language use in ESL instruction, there is a wide array of alternatives to study this phenomenon. After learning certain

traits of L1 use through this dissertation study, the above topics promise important research alternatives that can be explored. An important question that will continue to challenge adult ESL education is if and how much L1 should be allowed in the ESL classroom. The intensity of adult students' L1 or L2 use will continue to be controversial for students and administrators who may need to define and establish limitations.

### **Summary**

An important challenge that immigrants encounter when they arrive in this country is the need to adapt to a new society that requires them to learn English. In searching for better opportunities, education and language learning become significant factors for both children and adults. For adult ELL's specifically, it is often difficult to learn English because of their inability to understand class instruction when English-only policies are in place. These policies are guided by the belief of some educators that teaching English entirely in English results in more English. Other educators who are more flexible in their language teaching philosophies, however, prefer to use students' L1 occasionally to clarify, make language comparisons, and move faster on ESL lessons that would, otherwise, take longer to teach entirely in English. Although many ESL educators believe that it makes sense to immerse students in the target language without using students' native language, a large body of research suggests the opposite (Auerbach, 2000 & 1993; Bigelow & Tarone, 2004; Cummins, 2007; Huerta-Macias & Kephart, 2009; Pappamihel et al. 2008; Wigglesworth, 2005;).

Some adult ELLs come to ESL classes with a high level of literacy in their L1, while others may not have had an opportunity to go to school in their native countries. Native language literacy levels are generally represented by educational backgrounds. The level of

education and proficiency in the L1 defines how differently adult ELLs acquire a second language. Participant L1 educational levels were important components of this dissertation study.

The purpose of this study was to discover *if* and *how* adult adequate formal learners used their first language as they learned academic English. For the purposes of this study adequate formal learners were those who had a high school or college education in their L1. The three research questions yielded important findings. The results indicated a significant amount of L1 use throughout the study by all participants. It was also found that class participation was a preferred learning practice, as students' objectives were both learning the skill of writing and acquiring English as a second language. Findings also suggested that participants had mixed and unclear opinions about the role their L1 played in their English learning.

A total of seven participants were selected to participate in this study. These students were identified as adequate formal schooled as defined by Freeman and Freeman (2009). Students participated in interview sessions, classroom observations, and reflective journal writing. The data collected were analyzed, coded, and categorized into themes. The organization of these data served to answer each of the research questions in this study.

For question number one it was not surprising to find that all participants used their L1 in their English writing classes. Although the first research question was objectively posed implying that all participants used their L1 (*i.e., how frequently and under what circumstances do adequate formal learners use their L1 to develop academic English in an adult ESL program?*), the expectation was that it would be difficult for participants not to utilize their native language in one way or another. One major reason for this assumption was the fact that almost all participants lived in Mexico up until their entrance to this English language Institute.

It was unreasonable to expect total and exclusive use of English both as the learned element and as a communication tool, considering that they all had been in this institute for only four months when data collection began. During interviews participants elaborated on the poor quality of their English classes in Mexico, which they described having produced few learning gains. In virtue of such a short time in this country learning a skill that may not have been addressed in any of their English classes in Mexico, their use of L1 was found to be a necessary component of their English learning.

For question number two the main objective was to understand what learning practice adequate formal learners used the most as they learned English. Additionally, there was an interest to know how academic learning practices in Mexico differed from language learning practices in the university English language institute. As adequate formal learners, all participants had either a high school or college level education. The expected outcome was that all participants would demonstrate some of the learning strategies specifically obtained during their respective fields of study in their L1. Irrespective of what category was rated highest or lowest as an L1 learning practice, once in the English writing classes participants had to find their own personal learning strength concentrating on two objectives: Learning how to write and understanding the language to be able to write. The goal was exploring *how* learning took place. As adequate formal learners, participants had to have acquired best practices in their individual school experiences in Mexico as they went through their academic journeys. It was speculated that learning styles or practices should not differ significantly from L1 to L2, given that learning practices reflected mainly *how* a student learned, not *what* a student learned. A notable difference in the learning practices of participants from their L1 to their L2 was discovered. Participants ended up applying more learning techniques that allowed them to deal with the

challenges of learning writing skills in a second language. It was concluded that students who had adequate formal education and relatively extensive academic background in their L1 still needed to find new ways of learning when trying to acquire writing skills in a new language.

For question number three there was an apparent contradiction in the way participants felt about using their L1. While findings indicated continuous use of students' native language to supplement their English writing learning, almost all students described a negative role about its use and need. Some participants demonstrated a confused opinion on whether their L1 should be used or disregarded. Some described a useful role initially and later claimed that it as a barrier for learning. While only three participants convincingly commented all along on the usefulness of their L1 when learning L2, the remaining four students had on-going doubts about recognizing their native language as a resourceful tool for learning English writing.

Three different conclusions were derived from the findings of the research questions. The first conclusion was that, regardless of school policies or instructor expectations, adequate formal learners need to use their L1 to learn L2. The second conclusion was that class participation can be a useful source of learning academic English for adequate formal learners. The third conclusion was that students have confused opinions about the role their L1 plays in their L2 learning.

Drawing on the three conclusions identified, implications were presented for adult ESL personnel and for adequate formal schooled students. Implications for adult ESL personnel include acknowledging that adult ESL students need their L1 as an L2 learning resource. Rather than seeing it as a threat to second language learning, adult ESL educators need to define how students' L1 can be best utilized as a learning resource without penalizing its use. In formulating

academic learning objectives, class participation needs to be emphasized as a strong medium of instruction.

Implications for adequate formal schooled students include using and recognizing their L1 as a valuable and significant learning resource when learning L2. Adult students' L2 academic learning objectives must be set and achieved without neglecting or trying to avoid the use of their L1.

Regardless of whether participants believed in the usefulness or ineffectiveness of their L1, an internal mechanism seemed to always drive students to use their L1 during their ESL learning. This was reflected in the nearly unavoidable need to ask a question to a peer, inquire about a translation, or make occasional comments aloud all in Spanish. During interviews participants expressed how they were constantly confronted with their L1 as they worked towards their English writing learning objectives.

An important factor that influenced participant decision to use the L1 was the learning environment that instructors created. With their actions, teaching approaches, and linguistic tolerance, instructors played a significant role in encouraging or keeping students from using their L1. While instructors expected English use throughout the semester, participants and other students found it easier to communicate using their L1.

The sample group of adequate formal learner participants in this dissertation study used their L1 quite extensively. While the students may have underestimated the value of using their L1 in learning in L2, the impact their L1 had on their English writing learning in this study demonstrated that it was nearly impossible for this group of second language learners not to rely on it. The native language of adequate formal learners was found to be not only beneficial, but also a necessary component, regardless of instructor encouragement and expectations of English-



Only in the classroom. As claimed by Auerbach (1993), allowing the use of students' L1 gave way to more self-confidence, class participation, and consequently more use of English.

APPENDIX A1  
Learner Category Survey

Please answer all that apply:

1. How long have you lived in the U.S.?
  - a) 1-3 yrs.
  - b) 4-6 yrs.
  - c) More than 7 yrs.
  - d) I do not live in the U.S.

2. What's your highest level of education attainment in your home country? Please circle one.

None, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, University.....

3. What's your highest level of education in the U.S.? Please circle one.

None, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, University.....

4. At any point in your education, did you ever have to drop from school? If so, during what grade level? \_\_\_\_\_ How long were you out of school? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX A2  
Encuesta sobre Categorías de Estudiante

Favor de seleccionar la respuesta correspondiente:

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido usted en EEUU?
  - a) 1 a 3 años
  - b) 4 a 6 años
  - c) Más de 7 años
  - d) No vivo en EEUU
  
2. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de estudio que cursó en su país? Favor de circular su respuesta.  
  
Ninguno, Kinder, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Universidad.....
  
3. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de estudio que cursó en EEUU? Favor de circular su respuesta.  
  
Ninguno, Kinder, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Universidad.....
  
4. En algún momento durante su estudio, ¿tuvo usted que dejar la escuela? \_\_\_\_\_ Si su respuesta es que sí, ¿En qué grado escolar sucedió esto? \_\_\_\_\_ ¿Por cuánto tiempo estuvo usted fuera de la escuela sin estudiar? \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B1  
Consent to Participate in Research

**Title of the Research:** Effects of Adult First Language Education on the Development of Academic English for English Language Learners

**Study Investigator:** Joel S. Garza

**What is the purpose of the research?**

You are invited to participate in a research project that will investigate how different levels of first language education affect learning English.

**How many people will participate in this study?**

9 students

**What is my involvement for participating in this study?**

You will participate in all requirements of the Beginning Level Writing course work whether you agree or do not agree to allow your work to be used as research data. The course instructor will be responsible for assigning your grade for the course; the researcher will have no input in determining your grade in the course. For this study, the researcher will ask you to write in a reflective journal about ways that you use your first language as you are learning English. You will also be asked to complete a survey and to be interviewed several times about how you use your first language as you learn English. If you agree to participate, you agree that your work in the Beginning Writing Course may be used as part of the data collected for the study. Reporting of all findings will be done without using your name.

**What are the risks of participating in this study and how will they be minimized?**

There are no risks identified for this particular research study, as any and all information will be coded and no student names will be used.

**What are the benefits for participating in this study?**

If you choose to participate, you may learn more about how you use your first language as you learn English. The results of the study will help adult ESL programs design better teaching methodologies.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

All information will be kept confidential. Your name will be coded and will not appear in any study documents. All information collected will be kept in a locked file in the office of the researcher. Interviews will be audio recorded and will be saved electronically in a computer file that only the researcher has access to.

**Is my participation voluntary?**

This research project is voluntary and you may choose not to participate without penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time you will be allowed to do so without any penalty. None of your grades will be affected by your decision to participate or not to participate.

**Can I stop taking part in this research?**

If you withdraw from the research, any audiotape and/or documents containing your data will be destroyed.

**What are the procedures for withdrawal?**

If you decide to withdraw from the study at any time, you will need to notify Mr. Joel S. Garza

**Will I be given a copy of the consent document to keep?**

Yes.

You should feel free to ask questions now or at any time during the study. If you have any questions, you can contact Mr. Joel S. Garza at (956) 882-4179 or (956) 455-3080. If you have any questions about the right of research subjects, contact the Chairman of the UTB/TSC IRB - Human Subjects or the Office of Sponsored Programs at UTB/TSC (956) 882-7849.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have received answers to all of your questions, you have been told who to call if you have any more questions, you have freely decided to participate in this research, and you understand that you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please Print)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B2  
Consentimiento para Participar en Investigación

**Título de la Investigación:** Efectos del Nivel Educativo en la Lengua Materna en el Desarrollo de Inglés Académico para Estudiantes Adultos de Inglés como Segundo Idioma

**Investigador:** Joel S. Garza

**¿Cuál es el propósito de este estudio?**

Se le invita a tomar parte de este estudio en donde se investigará cómo afecta el nivel de estudio en la lengua materna al aprender inglés.

**¿Cuántas personas tomarán parte en este estudio?**

9 estudiantes.

**¿De qué manera participaré en este estudio?**

Usted participará y cumplirá todos los requisitos del curso Beginning Writing acepte o no tomar parte de este estudio. El maestro(a) será el/la responsable de asignar su calificación al final del curso. El investigador no tomará ninguna decisión sobre esta asignación. En este estudio, el investigador le pedirá que reflexione de manera escrita sobre maneras en que usted usa su lengua materna para aprender inglés. Además, se le pedirá que llene una encuesta y será entrevistado(a) varias veces acerca del uso de su lengua materna para aprender inglés. Si usted acepta participar en este estudio se compromete a proveer parte de su trabajo del curso de Beginning Writing para fines de estudio y análisis. Todo resultado se reportará sin usar nombres de estudiantes.

**¿Qué riesgos existen al participar en este estudio y cómo se pueden limitar?**

No se anticipa ningún riesgo al participar en este estudio, ya que toda la información será codificada y no se usarán nombres de estudiantes.

**¿Cuáles son los beneficios de participar en este estudio?**

Si opta por participar, usted podrá descubrir cómo emplea su lengua materna al aprender inglés. Los resultados de este estudio contribuirán al desarrollo de mejores técnicas pedagógicas para la enseñanza del idioma inglés.

**¿Cómo se protegerá mi confidencialidad?**

Toda información se mantendrá de manera confidencial. Su nombre será codificado y no aparecerá en ningún documento del estudio. Toda la información que se recaude se mantendrá en un archivo bajo llave en la oficina del investigador. Las entrevistas serán grabadas en audio y se mantendrán electrónicamente en un archivo exclusivo de computadora del cual solamente el investigador tendrá acceso.

**¿Es voluntaria mi participación?**

Este proyecto de investigación es estrictamente voluntario y usted puede desistir de participar sin que sea afectado(a) su desempeño escolar. Si usted decide dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento no tendrá hacer sin ningún tipo de represarías. Sus calificaciones no serán afectadas por su decisión de participar o no participar.

**¿Puedo detener mi participación en este estudio?**

Si usted decide dejar de participar en este estudio, todo material de audio y/o documentos que tengan su información serán completamente destruídos.

**¿Cuál es el procedimiento para dejar de participar en el estudio?**

Si usted decide dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento, deberá informar al investigador Joel S. Garza.

**¿Se me dará una copia de este documento de consentimiento?**

Sí.

Como participante usted tendrá la oportunidad de hacer preguntas ahora o en cualquier momento durante este estudio. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta puede comunicarse con el Sr. Joel S. Garza al teléfono (956) 882-4179 o (956) 455-3080. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre los derechos de los participantes en estos estudios comuníquese con el/la director(a) de la mesa directiva institucional de investigaciones (IRB) de la universidad de Texas en Brownsville y Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) o a la oficina de programas de patrocinio de UTB/TSC (Sponsored Programs) al teléfono (956) 882-7849.

Su firma a continuación establece que usted ha leído toda la información mencionada, que ha recibido respuesta a todas sus preguntas, que se le ha informado con quién comunicarse si tiene más preguntas, que usted ha elegido participar voluntariamente en este estudio y que se da por enterado(a) que sus derechos siguen en pie.

Nombre del Participante:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Letra de Molde)

Firma del Participante:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del Investigador:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C1  
First Sample Interview Questions

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you attended school in the U.S.?
3. Tell me about your school experience(s).
4. Do you feel that using your first language is beneficial when you are learning English?  
How?
5. How do you use your native language to learn English? Give some examples.
6. Do you think your education in your first language helps you learn English in this  
program? How does it help you? Give some examples.
7. Do you prefer English-only instruction or bilingual instruction when necessary? In what  
ways does it help you when your instructors use your first language? In what ways does  
it help you when your instructors use English-only instruction?
8. Complete this statement, when I'm learning English in class I use my first language  
when.....Explain what you do.
9. How do you communicate with your classmates in class or outside of class to help you  
learn English? Can you give some examples?
10. Do you need to have English/Spanish dictionaries when you are in class? How does this  
help you?



APPENDIX C2  
Primera Lista de Preguntas para Entrevistas

1. ¿Dónde nació usted?
2. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha asistido a la escuela en EEUU?
3. Cuénteme sobre su experiencia escolar.
4. ¿Piensa usted que el usar su lengua materna le beneficia al aprender inglés? ¿De qué manera?
5. ¿Cómo emplea su lengua materna al aprender inglés? ¿Podría dar algunos ejemplos?
6. ¿Cree usted que el nivel educativo en su lengua materna le ayuda a aprender inglés en este programa? ¿De qué manera?
7. ¿Usted prefiere lecciones totalmente en inglés o lecciones bilingües conforme sea necesario? ¿De qué manera le beneficiaría a usted que sus maestros(as) usara su lengua materna? ¿De qué manera le beneficiaría a usted que sus maestros(as) usaran inglés solamente?
8. Termine esta frase, Cuando estoy aprendiendo inglés en el salón de clase yo uso mi lengua materna cuando.....
9. ¿Cómo se comunica usted con sus compañeros de clase dentro y fuera del salón para ayudarse a aprender inglés? ¿Podría dar ejemplos?
10. ¿Necesita usted diccionarios de inglés/español cuando está usted en clase? ¿En qué manera le ayuda esto?

APPENDIX D1  
Second Sample Interview Questions

1. For you, is your L1 important in your ESL classes? How important is it?
2. What learning strategies did you use in school in Mexico (i.e., writing notes, looking up words, etc.)? Are you using those same strategies learning English?
3. For you, is it difficult to learn English? Why or why not?
4. What do you find easier, listening to a lecture or seeing what you are being taught?  
Why?
5. When you were at school in Mexico, did you ask a lot of questions in class?
6. Do you feel confident about learning English? Why?
7. Do you try to start thinking in English when you write (and read)?
8. Do you understand everything that the instructors says when he/she speaks only in English?
9. How do you define success in learning English?
10. Do you feel anxiety or frustration when you try to use English and you have difficulty?  
Why or why not?

APPENDIX D2  
Segunda Lista de Preguntas Para Entrevistas

1. ¿Para usted, es importante su primer idioma en sus clases de inglés? ¿Qué tan importante es?
2. ¿Qué técnicas de aprendizaje usó usted durante su período escolar en México (tales como tomar apuntes, buscar palabras, etc.)? ¿Está usted usando esas mismas técnicas para aprender inglés?
3. Para usted, ¿Es difícil aprender inglés? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
4. ¿Qué es más fácil para usted, escuchar la lección o ver la lección? ¿Por qué?
5. When you were at school in Mexico, did you ask a lot of questions in class?
6. ¿Se siente usted seguro(a) en su aprendizaje de inglés? ¿Por qué?
7. Cuando usted escribe (y lee), ¿Trata de pensar en inglés?
8. Cuando el maestro(a) habla en inglés, ¿Entiende usted todo lo que él/ella dice?
9. ¿Cómo define usted el éxito al aprender inglés?
10. ¿Siente usted ansiedad o frustración cuando trata de usar el inglés y tiene dificultad? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

APPENDIX E1  
Reflective Journal Optional Prompts

Directions: When you write your reflective journal after each class, always try to answer the main question to elaborate on your response.

How did you use your first language to help you with today's lesson?

- What questions did you ask your instructor today?
- Was any part of the lesson content already familiar to you? Explain why.
- When you write, do you think in English or Spanish? Explain why.
- What made it easier for you to understand the lesson today? Explain why.
- How did the instructor assist you today? Explain.
- What did you rely on from your first language in today's lesson? Explain.

APPENDIX E2  
Temas para el Diario de Reflexión

Instrucciones: Cuando escriba en su diario al final de cada clase, siempre trate de contestar la primera pregunta al desarrollar su respuesta.

¿De qué manera usó usted su lengua materna para ayudarle en la lección de hoy?

- ¿Qué preguntas le hizo a su maestro(a) hoy?
- ¿Sabía usted de antemano alguna parte de la lección de hoy? Explique por qué.
- Cuando usted escribe, ¿Piensa en español o en inglés? Explique por qué.
- ¿Qué le hizo entender más la lección de hoy? Explique por qué.
- ¿De qué manera le ayudó el maestro(a) hoy? Explique por qué.
- ¿Cómo dependió usted de su lengua materna para la lección de hoy? Explique.

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